SUMMER MATTERS

NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING ASSOCIATION

PURPOSE-
Program has mission and vision statements that are grounded in the needs of its community and connected to a current strategic plan. Program sets annual goals for youth and for the organization that drive a continuous cycle of evaluation and quality improvement.

Mission and Goals

1) Grounded Mission and Vision
Program has used a variety of information sources, including direct feedback from community members, to conduct a community needs assessment. Program has mission and vision statements that are connected to the needs of the community served.

2) Youth Outcome Goals
Program has at least two youth outcome goals that are aligned with the mission and the needs of the youth served and have all of the following characteristics: specific, measurable, realistic and time-limited.

Evaluation and Evidence

3) Goal Measurement
All youth outcome and organizational goals are tied to indicators and data collection methods.

4) Stakeholder Perspective Data
Program collects data on stakeholder perspectives from at least three groups (ex. staff, youth, families and partners).

5) Average Daily Attendance
On average, participants attend at least 85% of the summer session.

PLANNING-
Program is designed to allocate enough time, staff and resources to promote positive academic and developmental youth outcomes. Program has a proactive summer program planning process that is inclusive of all key stakeholders and connected to the goals of the program. Program has a comprehensive structure in place for all programming throughout the summer, in advance of the session.

Program Design

6) Adult to Youth Ratio
The average program activity has an adult to youth ratio of 1:8 or lower.

7) Physical Activity
Program dedicates at least 30 minutes per 3 hours of programming daily for physical activity for all youth.

8) Food Service
Appropriate for schedule, all meals (breakfast, lunch, snack) are provided for young people every day the program is in session.

9) Total Hours of Programming
Program offers a minimum of 150 hours of programming to each youth.

Curriculum and Activities

10) Staff Collaborative Planning
Site coordinators and line staff have input into selection and development of the curriculum and activities for the summer through collaborative planning sessions at least three months prior to the start of the session.

11) Lesson Plan Framework
Program provides site coordinators and line staff a framework for unit and lesson planning that is connected to program goals and includes instructional strategies and support for benchmarking. Staff consistently uses framework to plan units and lessons.

12) Use of a Certified Teacher
There is a certified teacher on staff or available for consultation from the beginning and throughout the duration of the curriculum development and activity planning process to assist staff.

STAFF-

Program's recruitment and staffing process intentionally yields culturally competent staff with relevant skills. Program staff is empowered to manage the program and has a voice in organizational decisions. Program provides extensive opportunities for staff development and advancement before, during and after the session.

Staff Training

13) Alignment of Staff Needs and Training

Program formally assesses staff abilities upon hire against a set of articulated competencies for each position and sets training objectives based on identified needs in those competencies.

14) Staff Training Timeline

Program requires summer program-specific staff training, connected to identified staff needs, at least two weeks before the program starts and includes additional paid time for individual or group preparation.

Staff And Professional Development

15) Staff Observation and Feedback

Site coordinator observes each staff member multiple times during the summer session and provides feedback connected to identified staff competencies at planned intervals.

PARTNERSHIPS-

Program builds and maintains strong linkages with partners, including community organizations, the public school system and government agencies, that are supportive of its mission and have a vested interest in the program's success. Program has a formal structure for communication and data sharing with all key external partners. Program builds and maintains strong linkages with families.

Schools and Community Organizations

16) Partner Staff Collaboration

Program staff and partner staff collaborate to align program activities and coordinate services for youth. Strategies such as joint training, team-teaching, co-facilitation, shadowing, and mentoring are implemented.

Families

17) Relationship-Building with Families

All staff makes an effort to learn the names of all parents and caregivers and greet them personally. All staff makes a regular effort to share positive information and constructive feedback with parents and caregivers about their child through both written updates and conversations.

18) Family Involvement

Families are considered primary stakeholders in the program and there are both required and voluntary opportunities for families to participate in the program.

INDIVIDUALIZED-

Program assesses young people's needs and develops individualized strategies for meeting program goals.

19) Individualized, Tailored Instruction

The results of the pre-program assessment(s) inform lesson planning and instruction, and staff is equipped with skills to differentiate activities for youth of different abilities or attitudes.

20) Multiple, Grouping Strategies

Most activities show a blend of large group, small group and individualized instruction that is planned in advance. Transitions between groupings are smooth for both youth and staff.

INTEGRATED-

Programming builds skills, knowledge and behaviors that promote academic success and healthy development. Activities show a blend of academic strategies and social/emotional development strategies throughout the entire day.

21) Integration of Academic and Developmental Focus
Program schedule and activities show a full integration of strategies to promote academic growth and strategies to promote social or emotional growth. All staff leads integrated activities throughout the day.

22) Positive Reinforcement
All staff use positive reinforcement to recognize movement toward specific group or individual goals in all activities. Positive reinforcement highlights specific behavior rather than praising or calling attention to a particular participant doing the behaving.

23) Behavior Management
Program environment is characterized by an intentional, consistent behavior leadership style led by both staff and youth throughout the entire program day. Staff and youth hold each other accountable to a jointly developed behavioral contract that defines positive behavior expectations and consequences. Staff and youth consistently demonstrate how the contract is applied and what it looks like in practice.

24) Inquiry-Based Learning
Most activities involve a hands-on, kinesthetic or project-based component that allows youth to engage in in-depth investigations with objects, materials, phenomena and ideas and draw meaning and understanding from those experiences.

25) Collaborative Learning
Most activities promote collaborative learning and interdependence among youth. Successful completion requires youth to work together to produce a product or display of their shared learning.

26) Creative Thinking
Most activities foster creative development and allow youth to choose active or artistic expressions to convey ideas and build skills. Creative activities are tied to age appropriate skills and learning comprehension.

27) Youth-Produced Work
Most youth-produced work has a purpose and a value in the program. Presentation and sharing of youth work is a regular part of activities. Program projects and activities lead to a tangible end product that reflects the work of the youth over the course of the summer.

28) Youth Voice
Over the course of the program, all youth have the opportunity to make major decisions, based on their interests, which impact what and how they learn in the program**.**

UNIQUE PROGRAM CULTURE

Program creates a "summer culture" that is different from the school year and promotes a sense of community.

29) Program Spirit
Program creates a spirit of community and pride among all young people through: daily shared traditions, cheers, competitions, team designations and awards for positive actions or attitudes.

30) Physical Environment
Physical environment promotes creative thinking and exploration. Activity space set-up is different from a traditional classroom, with furniture arranged to create an intimate, interactive environment. Activity spaces are named in relation to the theme or goals of the program. Decorations are youth-driven and thematic.

31) Transitions and Meals
Arrival, departure, transitions and meal times are positive, unique experiences. Program incorporates themes, entertainment or aspects of program culture into most of the unstructured time.

32) Advance Planning

All activities show evidence of a detailed lesson plan and begin and end on time.

33) Clear Expectations

Staff sets clear expectations for activities by consistently framing and focusing the activity using these four strategies: Directions for the activity; discussion of how success will be achieved and assessed; discussion of the level of attention or interaction required; and clarifying statements to refocus participants as needed.

34) Debriefs/Checks for Understanding

All staff use debriefing techniques, recall and checks for understanding throughout the duration and at the end of each activity. Staff may ask participants to recall factual information, make generalizations, inferences or real-world applications based on what they have learned. Recall connects previous learning to current activities.

35) Staff Engagement

All staff have a clear role in the success of their activities they co-facilitate and are actively engaged throughout all activities.

36) Skill Building

Most activities are intentionally linked to age-appropriate academic and developmental skills and work to build subject matter expertise and skill mastery through deep analysis of a subject or idea.