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Ultimate Planning Checklist for Extended Summer Program Leaders

Planning a summer school program can feel overwhelming, but the Ultimate Planning Checklist for Extended Summer Program Leaders is here to help.

Whether you're focusing on helping students catch up, offering exciting enrichment opportunities, or supporting high schoolers with credit recovery, this checklist breaks everything down into manageable steps. Think of this as your go-to guide for staying organized and confident every step of the way.

1. Pre-Planning (3-5 Months Before Program Launch)

2. Recruitment + Staffing (2-4 Months Before Program Launch)

3. Operational Planning (1-2 Months Before Program Launch)

4. Program Launch (Start of Program)

5. Program Monitoring (During Program)

6. Closure + Evaluation (End of Program)

1. Pre-Planning

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Vision and Goals	☐ Define the overarching purpose of the summer school program: 　» Learning recovery to address gaps in core subjects. 　» Enrichment opportunities to explore STEM, arts, or other special programs. 　» Credit recovery for secondary students needing graduation support. ☐ Develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals: 　» Example: Increase participating students' math proficiency scores by 20%. 　» Example: Ensure 95% attendance rate among enrolled students. ☐ Identify success metrics for academic and non-academic outcomes: 　» Assessments, attendance, parent satisfaction surveys, and behavior reports. ☐ Other: _____
Budget	☐ Determine funding sources and timelines: 　» Review federal (State Extended Year funds, Title I) and local grants. 　» Evaluate potential partnerships for additional resources. ☐ Break down all expenses: 　» Staffing costs: salaries, stipends, benefits. 　» Facility costs: utilities, maintenance. 　» Materials and resources: curriculum, manipulatives, technology, supplies. 　» Operational costs: transportation, meals, contingency funds. ☐ Build a budget buffer for unexpected expenses. ☐ Other: _____
Partner Engagement	☐ Form a diverse planning committee: 　» Include representation from teachers, administrative staff, counselors, parents, and community members. ☐ Create a clear meeting calendar: 　» Set agenda topics for each stage of planning. 　» Designate a note-taker to document key decisions and action items. ☐ Communicate regularly with district leaders: 　» Share progress reports and seek input. 　» Align with district priorities and guidelines. ☐ Other: _____

1. Pre-Planning

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS

Program Logistics	☐ Choose dates and daily schedule:
	  » Factor in family schedules, transportation availability, and community events.
	  » Establish a start time, end time, and breaks.
	☐ Select and confirm facilities:
	  » Evaluate capacity, accessibility, air conditioning, and equipment needs.
	  » Reserve spaces for classrooms, recreation, meals, and administrative tasks.
	☐ Arrange custodial services:
	  » Establish a cleaning schedule with the facilities team.
	  » Stock cleaning supplies and establish sanitation protocols.
	☐ Other: _____

Curriculum and Resources	☐ Conduct a needs assessment:
	  » Use recent standardized test scores and teacher feedback to identify focus areas.
	  » Consider behavioral learning needs in addition to academic subjects.
	☐ Choose standards-aligned curriculum:
	  » Prioritize engaging and research-backed materials.
	  » Ensure differentiation and language accessibility for diverse learners.
	☐ Order or prepare supplemental resources:
	  » Interactive digital tools, physical manipulatives, and enrichment materials.
	☐ Build partnerships:
	  » Collaborate with local libraries, educational vendors like BookNook, and non-profits for additional programming support.
	☐ Other: _____

Technology	☐ Inventory available technology:
	  » Count devices (laptops, tablets), projectors, and Wi-Fi hotspots.
	  » Assess software licenses for programs being used.
	☐ Address technology gaps:
	  » Procure devices and ensure equitable distribution.
	  » Partner with local organizations for funding or donations.
	☐ Develop a tech support plan:
	  » Assign dedicated tech support staff.
	  » Access your district's troubleshooting guide for common issues.
	☐ Train staff on technology:
	  » Schedule training for online platforms and tools prior to the program.
	☐ Other: _____

2. Recruitment + Staffing

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Staffing Needs	☐ Calculate required staffing levels based on: 　» Projected student enrollment and class size ratios. 　» Specialized roles such as food service, paraprofessionals, and nurses. 　» Administrative support needs, including attendance clerks and program coordinators. ☐ Other: _____
Job Descriptions	☐ Create clear, detailed job descriptions for all roles: 　» Include qualifications, responsibilities, and compensation. 　» Highlight any professional development opportunities. ☐ Other: _____
Hiring Process	☐ Open recruitment channels: 　» Post job listings on district websites, social media, and local job boards. 　» Reach out to retired teachers, current district staff, university education programs, and community partners. ☐ Screen applications thoroughly: 　» Verify qualifications and certifications. 　» Conduct reference checks and background screenings. ☐ Schedule interviews: 　» Develop role-specific interview questions. 　» Use a scoring rubric to ensure fairness and consistency. ☐ Finalize hiring: 　» Extend offers with clear contracts and compensation details. 　» Address onboarding needs, including required paperwork and training schedules. ☐ Other: _____
Professional Development	☐ Plan mandatory training sessions: 　» Curriculum-specific instruction and delivery techniques. 　» Classroom management strategies tailored for summer programming. 　» Cultural competency training to address diverse student needs. 　» Technology usage for instructional tools and platforms. ☐ Develop ongoing support: 　» Schedule weekly staff meetings for troubleshooting and sharing best practices. 　» Assign peer mentors for external new hires. ☐ Other: _____

2. Recruitment + Staffing

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS

Scheduling Staff	☐ Create staffing schedules:
	  » Ensure appropriate teacher-to-student ratios for each session.
	  » Assign support staff to manage transitions, meals, and recreational activities.
	☐ Plan for contingencies:
	  » Build a substitute pool to address unexpected absences.
	☐ Other: _____

Student Recruitment	☐ Develop an outreach plan:
	  » Use district data to identify eligible students based on academic needs.
	  » Communicate with families via multiple channels (emails, phone calls, flyers, and social media).
	☐ Host informational events:
	  » Use district data to identify eligible students based on academic needs.
	  » Communicate with families via multiple channels (emails, phone calls, flyers, and social media).
	☐ Simplify the registration process:
	  » Use district data to identify eligible students based on academic needs.
	  » Communicate with families via multiple channels (emails, phone calls, flyers, and social media).
	☐ Track registration:
	  » Monitor daily numbers and follow up with families who express interest but have not completed enrollment.
	☐ Other: _____

Volunteer Support	☐ Recruit volunteers:
	  » Contact local community organizations, colleges, and parent-teacher associations.
	  » Screen volunteers for suitability and provide training.
	☐ Define roles:
	  » Assign tasks like classroom aides, lunchtime monitors, and enrichment activity leaders.
	☐ Other: _____

3. Operational Planning

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Registration and Enrollment	☐ Monitor registration progress: » Set weekly benchmarks to track enrollment numbers. » Follow up with families who have incomplete registrations. ☐ Establish a help desk or hotline: » Provide assistance for families encountering issues with registration. » Offer multilingual support to ensure accessibility. ☐ Other: _____
Transportation	☐ Develop bus routes: » Use student addresses and program schedules to optimize efficiency. » Coordinate with the district transportation department. ☐ Communicate routes to families: » Send detailed instructions and pickup/drop-off times. » Include a backup contact for day-of transportation issues. ☐ Create contingency plans: » Arrange for backup drivers and vehicles. » Establish protocols for unexpected delays or cancellations. ☐ Other: _____
Meals and Nutrition	☐ Plan menus in collaboration with food services: » Ensure meals meet dietary guidelines and account for common allergies.. » Offer vegetarian, gluten-free, and other special diet options. ☐ Coordinate meal logistics: » Assign meal distribution areas and staff roles. » Schedule staggered meal times to prevent overcrowding. ☐ Communicate meal plans to families: » Share menus and options in advance. » Provide forms for dietary requests. ☐ Other: _____

3. Operational Planning

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Safety and Compliance	☐ Conduct safety audits: 　» Inspect facilities for hazards and address issues immediately. 　» Review emergency exits, lighting, and first-aid supplies. ☐ Update emergency protocols: 　» Create step-by-step guides for fire drills, lockdowns, and medical emergencies. 　» Train all staff on emergency procedures. ☐ Secure required permits and insurance: 　» Verify compliance with local and state regulations. 　» Confirm adequate liability coverage. ☐ Other: _____
Facility Readiness	☐ Perform walkthroughs: 　» Verify that classrooms, recreation areas, and common spaces are clean and equipped. 　» Test HVAC systems, lighting, and plumbing. ☐ Set up classrooms: 　» Arrange desks, chairs, and instructional materials. 　» Ensure technology (projectors, whiteboards, tablets) is functional. ☐ Designate staff workspaces: 　» Provide teachers and support staff with designated areas for planning and breaks. ☐ Other: _____
Communication	☐ Finalize family communication plans: 　» Share a detailed program calendar and contact list. 　» Send reminders for key dates (orientation, first day, etc.). ☐ Set up a feedback system: 　» Provide a way for families to ask questions and share concerns. 　» Assign staff to monitor and respond promptly. ☐ Other: _____

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4. Program Launch

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Orientation	☐ Host staff orientation: 　» Review program goals, schedules, and emergency protocols. 　» Distribute contact lists and quick-reference guides. ☐ Organize student and family orientation: 　» Provide an overview of expectations and schedules. 　» Address FAQs and distribute welcome packets. ☐ Other: _____
First-Day Operations	☐ Set up a check-in process: 　» Use a designated team to greet students and verify attendance. 　» Ensure late arrivals are directed efficiently. ☐ Monitor classroom readiness: 　» Verify that materials, technology, and seating arrangements are in place. 　» Address any last-minute issues promptly. ☐ Other: _____
Classroom Engagement	☐ Plan introductory activities: 　» Use icebreakers to build rapport among students and staff. 　» Conduct pre-assessments to gauge student levels and needs. ☐ Establish routines: 　» Introduce daily schedules, behavioral expectations, and classroom norms. 　» Display visual aids (e.g., schedules, emergency exits). ☐ Other: _____
On-Site Support	☐ Assign "floating" staff: 　» Ensure administrators or support staff are available for troubleshooting. 　» Use walkie-talkies or communication apps for real-time coordination. ☐ Set up help stations: 　» Provide areas for tech issues, first aid, and general inquiries. ☐ Other: _____
Family Communication	☐ Send first-day updates: 　» Share highlights and reminders via email, text, or app notifications. 　» Include photos or quotes to build excitement (with parent permission/media release). ☐ Establish open communication: 　» Provide a contact number or email for day-to-day questions. ☐ Other: _____

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Attendance Tracking	☐ Monitor daily attendance: 　» Use digital attendance systems to track participation accurately. 　» Follow up immediately on unexcused absences. ☐ Communicate with families: 　» Notify parents/guardians of attendance issues promptly. 　» Provide resources or support for families with attendance barriers. ☐ Other: _____
Academic Progress	☐ Schedule regular assessments: 　» Use formative assessments to monitor progress weekly. 　» Share assessment data with staff to adjust instruction as needed. ☐ Hold staff check-ins: 　» Conduct weekly meetings to discuss student progress and challenges. 　» Develop intervention plans for struggling students. ☐ Other: _____
Behavior and Engagement	☐ Track behavior incidents: 　» Use logs to record and analyze patterns. 　» Implement positive reinforcement strategies to encourage engagement. ☐ Address disengagement: 　» Assign mentors or provide 1-on-1 check-ins for at-risk students. 　» Incorporate engaging activities like project-based learning or games. ☐ Other: _____
Family Updates	☐ Send weekly newsletters: 　» Highlight program successes and share reminders. 　» Include student spotlights and upcoming events. ☐ Offer feedback opportunities: 　» Conduct mid-program surveys for families and students. 　» Adjust program elements based on survey feedback. ☐ Other: _____
Operational Checks	☐ Review facilities: 　» Perform weekly walkthroughs to ensure cleanliness and safety. 　» Address maintenance issues promptly. ☐ Monitor transportation: 　» Check bus schedules and resolve delays or other issues. ☐ Other: _____

6. Closure + Evaluation

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTION ITEMS
Student Outcomes	☐ Administer final assessments: » Measure academic progress and growth in targeted areas. » Compile data for individual student reports. ☐ Share progress with families: » Distribute reports detailing student achievements and next steps. » Offer parent-teacher conferences for additional discussions. ☐ Other: _____
Staff Feedback	☐ Conduct exit interviews: » Gather insights on successes and challenges from staff. » Use feedback to inform future program planning. ☐ Administer staff surveys: » Focus on training, resources, and overall program support. ☐ Other: _____
Program Celebration	☐ Organize a closing event: » Highlight student achievements with certificates, awards, or performances. » Invite families and community partners to celebrate together. ☐ Showcase program highlights: » Create a photo slideshow or video recap to share with stakeholders. ☐ Other: _____
Data Analysis and Reporting	☐ Review program data: » Analyze trends in attendance, academic performance, and behavior. » Compare outcomes to initial goals and success metrics. ☐ Prepare a final report: » Summarize findings, lessons learned, and recommendations. » Share with district leaders, funders, and other stakeholders. ☐ Other: _____
Reflection and Planning	☐ Host a debrief session: » Gather input from staff, families, and students. » Document areas of success and improvement. ☐ Archive materials: » Save lesson plans, templates, and resources for future use. » Maintain records of program data and reports. ☐ Other: _____