



Evidence-based tools and guidance  
for delivering effective programs

PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

SITE CLIMATE

ACADEMICS & ENRICHMENT

STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STUDENT RECRUITMENT & ATTENDANCE

[summerlearningtoolkit.org](http://summerlearningtoolkit.org)



GUIDANCE FOR TOOL:

## SUMMER PROGRAM REFLECTION

This document provides guidance on how to use the [Summer Program Reflection](#) tool available in the Summer Learning Toolkit. You can also access the tool in the [Planning and Management](#) section of the Toolkit.

### What is the *SUMMER PROGRAM REFLECTION* tool and how can you use it?

The Summer Program Reflection tool was created by Bellwether Education Partners to provide districts and cities with a semi-structured guide to reflect on a recently completed summer program and begin planning for the upcoming summer with a focus on continuous program improvement. It contains prompts for reflection (what went well, what could be improved) in a variety of categories related to program planning and management, instruction, and student outcomes. It also encourages program leaders to incorporate key data sources to inform decisions and considerations for the next summer.

### Why is program reflection important?

**RAND** found that districts that used key continuous improvement data and recommendations to make program changes each year realized substantial improvement to the effectiveness of the program. The most influential information for continuous improvement included no-show rates and attendance; loss of instructional time; instructional practices in academics and enrichment; and site

climate. Measuring the quality of these program components requires the right data sources and thoughtful planning before the program begins.

### Who can benefit from this resource?

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- District central office managers
- School-based program leaders
- Nonprofit program leaders

### Tips for effectively reflecting on your program

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- An effective end-of-summer program reflection requires a clear program quality assessment process determined prior to the start of the program. This involves identifying the most important indicators of program quality and matching each to a data source or assessment. All program staff and teachers should be familiar with any assessments that will be used to measure program quality during the summer, as well as how feedback will be given to staff and how data will be used. Data sources may include:
  - **Program participation:** Daily attendance data at the student level to determine no-show rates and average daily attendance among those who attended.
  - **Site culture and climate:** An observation tool that looks for indicators of a positive culture and climate, including specific program principles, rules, or rituals.
  - **Use of time:** A classroom observation tool that documents the amount of academic time on task in various sessions.
  - **Academic and enrichment instructional quality:** A classroom observation tool that looks for indicators of a high-quality lesson in alignment with program goals, curricula and staff training.
  - **Site logistics and leadership:** Staff satisfaction surveys. Observations of site operations.

Without agreed upon, objective assessments, your program reflection may be based on subjective data alone and therefore not carry as much value or weight for program improvement. See the [\*\*Classroom Observation Tool\*\*](#) as an example that assesses multiple indicators of quality.

- Determine what your summer reflection and debrief process will look like. Be sure to include a variety of personnel who have a role in broader summer programmatic design as well as implementation at the district and site level. These stakeholders may include individuals involved in developing the curriculum, instruction, and professional development approaches and resources, and personnel involved with ongoing data collection, analysis, and/or evaluation of summer programming. Decide if one large or several smaller sessions will better suit your needs. If you host



multiple sessions, use the tool to document key themes and to summarize those conversations for subsequent meetings.

- Begin the reflection and planning process as soon as possible after the conclusion of the summer learning program, when personal accounts of successes and challenges are still fresh in the minds of program personnel. These first sessions may focus on anecdotal data and experiences if objective data are not yet available. Identify where additional reflection will be needed after additional summer data become available.
- Take some time to reflect on what the findings mean for your planning process the following year. Whom do you need to meet with and when? How often do cross-functional groups need to meet? Use these reflections and findings, including both accomplishments and challenges, to share goals for the next year's planning process.
- Continually revisit and reference the supporting data as the basis for planning and decision-making for future summer learning programs.

