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summerlearningtoolkit.org

Evidence-based tools and guidance for delivering effective programs

G GUIDANCE FOR SAMPLE:

BOSTON SUMMER ATTENDANCE TRACKER

This document provides guidance on how to use the Boston Summer Attendance Tracker sample available in the Summer Learning Toolkit. You can also access the sample in the Student Recruitment and Attendance section of the Toolkit.

What is the *BOSTON SUMMER ATTENDANCE TRACKER* sample and how can you use it?

The attendance tracker was developed by a consultant for Boston Afterschool and Beyond and administered at each of the 5th Quarter of Summer Learning sites (formerly the Boston Summer Learning Project). The tracker is designed to standardize attendance tracking across multiple sites and enables a real-time look at overall attendance trends and rates. Boston now uses an online attendance system, however the tracker was designed to be completed each day of the summer program and submitted to the central office weekly. Prior to distributing to sites, Boston Afterschool and Beyond pre-populated the "Attendance" tab of the worksheet with the roster for each site and other student information. The "Partnership Information" tab includes a summary of the overall attendance rate for the site. The "Cumulative" tab of the worksheet aggregates data to examine attendance rates at the student level.

Why is attendance tracking important?

RAND's research found that strong program attendance (at least 20 days per summer) produced

ongoing benefits for students. Therefore, a five-week program should aim for an 80 percent attendance rate or higher to enable the typical student to obtain about 25 hours of mathematics and 34 hours of ELA instruction over the course of the program (assuming approximately 75 minutes of mathematics and 120 minutes of ELA per summer program day).

This attendance goal is not easy to meet—across the five study districts, on average students attended 74 percent rather than 80 percent of the summer program. Daily attendance tracking can help to spot problems early so staff can focus on personalized outreach to absent students and their families. By tracking no-shows in addition to daily attendance, program leaders can budget more accurately for the next summer's program by basing staffing levels on actual attendance rather than enrollment.

Who can benefit from this resource?

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

Tips for tracking attendance effectively

While a standardized tool is necessary for collecting attendance data, a variety of complementary policies and strategies increase the likelihood of good attendance.

- Set and communicate an attendance policy: Many families believe that summer programs are more relaxed than the school year and therefore allow for dropping in and out of the summer session. Summer programs also compete with priorities for taking care of other siblings, vacations, and other activities. To ensure students attend regularly, it's important to set and communicate a firm attendance policy during enrollment, perhaps even requiring parents to indicate their agreement with the policy. For example, a program might require that students not miss more than three days during the summer program or risk removal from the program.

- Provide incentives: Many programs have found success by providing incentives for good attendance. These may include a required attendance threshold to be eligible for field trips and other special events like ice cream parties, water days, or dance parties.

- Require that site leaders take daily attendance in the tracker and submit the tracker at the end of each week to the central office. Assign a central office staff person to open each of the trackers weekly to ensure that the data is complete and accurate and gets transferred into a central office attendance system.