

## **Appendix B: Proposed Grant Requirements for Summer Semester<sup>⊗</sup>**

The purpose of the Summer Semester Grant Program is to provide funds to schools to ensure all students have the greatest opportunity to be successful in their academic pursuits. Summer Semester is intended to increase student learning by providing additional time and diverse instruction to students who need further help to master the state's content and performance standards. An important auxiliary goal of Summer Semester is to expose teachers to multiple teaching methodologies with the hope that what works in summer can be incorporated into the traditional nine-month school year. Summer Semester should give students and teachers a different educational experience from the traditional school year and reengage them learning and teaching.

As it is proposed, Summer Semester is anticipated to become a critical, remedial component of an effective and accountable education system within the state, and not an add-on program removed from the work that takes place during the school year. Research has proven that when done correctly, summer school can help students improve their performance. But to be successful, it must have certain elements. This proposal incorporates as many of those elements as possible, and sets forth rigorous guidelines in order to achieve success.

Following is a description of the components the Summer School Design Team determined would need to be in place in order for districts to successfully apply for and obtain these grant funds.

### **Programmatic Offerings**

The core subjects of math and language arts must be made available to students who need them Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Districts are encouraged to additionally provide social studies and science instruction for secondary grades, especially high school. Organizational and study skills should be emphasized throughout all grade levels as an important component of the curriculum.

For districts wishing to do so, it would be acceptable to offer summer school only to elementary OR secondary students, especially if the program is new.

### **Student Eligibility**

The purpose of Summer Semester is intervention and remediation. It is targeted toward students who need credit recovery or those who require additional instructional time to achieve proficiency on standards in order to be promoted to

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<sup>⊗</sup> Whenever the terms Summer Semester, summer school, summer programs, or summer offerings are used in this report, they should also be construed to be synonymous with and include inter-session programs for year-round schools.

the next grade. Generally students performing at the below basic or basic levels on multiple indicators (classroom, district, or statewide assessments) would be potentially eligible for the program. Please keep in mind the State Board of Education and the Department define an at-risk student as “An individual who exhibits behaviors that place the student at risk of experiencing educational failure”<sup>1</sup>

Care should be exercised in the referral of students with Individual Education Plans to programs funded by the Summer Semester grant program. It should first be determined that an Extended School Year or a unique special education offering is not appropriate for the student before referral to the remedial summer program; districts should also keep in mind the limit of Summer Semester funding to a percentage of students enrolled (see Budget Section below).

### **Length of Session**

A minimum of 60 instructional hours must be made available to elementary grade students (K-5/6.) These hours may be split between language arts and math.

A minimum of 60 instructional hours *per subject* must be made available to secondary students. If a student can prove proficient in the standards needing remediation in less than 60 hours, they do not have to sit for the entire class.

These are *minimum* instructional hour requirements; districts may certainly enhance offerings and exceed these hours.

### **Class Size**

When practical, every effort should be made by districts to limit class size to 10 in grades Kindergarten through 5, and to 15 in grades 6 through 12. Districts offering summer school should limit site locations to as few as is practical within that district.

Small districts which may have fewer than five students in either elementary or secondary grades who need summer remedial classes may apply to the Department for reimbursement of tutoring expenses.

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<sup>1</sup> Wyoming Department of Education, Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Section 4(b), Cheyenne, WY, 2001.

### **Individual Student Learning Plan**

An individual student learning plan should be developed for each student who attends Summer Semester. The plan should be brief but thorough and define the specific area(s) of proficiency the student needs to work on, establish learning goals, and set forth a plan to reach those goals. Districts are encouraged to use existing systems and/or programs as much as possible when designing the student learning plan for Summer Semester. For instance, a student's Individual Reading Plan for those who may be participating in the K-2 early literacy program could also serve as the Individual Student Learning Plan (for reading) for Summer Semester. Building Intervention or Student-at-Risk teams can be utilized to assist in formulating this plan.

Development of the student learning plan can serve as a vehicle to provide primary contact with the student's parent/guardian/family member. Parent involvement has been shown to be a critical element of a successful summer program, and the student learning plan can strengthen the connection between home and school. Homework should be encouraged. If a face-to-face meeting with parents absolutely cannot take place, the parent must at least acknowledge the student learning plan by signing it.

Upon completion of the summer program, the learning plan should be reviewed as part of the student's evaluation to verify whether or not the student met the goals set forth in the plan. The plan and the student's evaluation should be communicated to the student's teacher the following semester, and to the parent/guardian throughout the summer session, as well as at its end.

### **Professional Development**

It is the intent of the Design Team that certified teachers who teach during this time are those who are interested in working with at-risk students and are willing to adapt to multiple different learning styles. Indeed, improving teacher quality is at the forefront of No Child Left Behind. Professional development for summer school should be incorporated into teacher and district professional growth plans.

Teachers who work in the Summer Semester program should have at least seven clock hours of training each year in research-based strategies that engage students in learning, focusing on intensive individualized instructional approaches (such as cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, learner-centered or collaborative classrooms, reciprocal or project-based teaching, etc.). For the first year of this grant process (summer of 2004), one-hour classes which are pertinent to student learning or assessment will be offered during the WDE's School Improvement Conferences and will be considered for the seven-hour minimum training requirement to teach summer school.

In the following years, training must be more focused and targeted to individualized student learning.

Districts are encouraged to conduct sustained, focused training in new pedagogical approaches during the summer program itself. These types of action-research or group study projects are very appropriate for Summer Semester. Districts conducting this activity can request credit for the required seven hours of teacher training before it actually occurs. This can be accomplished in the grant process as part of the description of the project itself.

Districts applying for this grant must submit evidence of the specific professional development each of their Summer Semester teachers has undergone, and how they plan to sustain change in instruction over the summer period.

### **Program Monitoring**

To assure effectiveness of teaching and program quality, classes must be monitored at least once weekly by a district principal or superintendent trained in instructional strategies that research has shown have the greatest likelihood of positively affecting the learning of at-risk students.

### **Performance Evaluation**

In order for policymakers to make informed decisions concerning the continued support of summer intervention, systematic and ongoing program evaluation should be in place. Evaluation should examine the academic benefit students receive as well as perceptions of program quality by participants.

To measure *program quality* perceived by the users, three survey instruments should be developed by the WDE. One instrument each for students, parents or guardians, and teachers could be distributed to targeted grade groups, i.e., 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>. The surveys should gather such information as student perception of instruction during the school year versus summer school, parent observations of the program and its effect on their child, and teacher evaluation of the learning environment, student progress, and need for professional development.

Quantitative statistics should be gathered from each district on number of students eligible, number enrolled, and number successfully meeting the objectives set forth in their individual learning plans. Districts are encouraged also collect information on why some parents elected not to send their children to summer school so accommodations could be made when appropriate. What do districts do with students who do not successfully complete the summer program?

*Program effectiveness* should measure learning gains and sustainability. However, it is difficult at this point to establish a comprehensive statewide analysis due to the tremendous transition the state is currently undergoing in answering some of the demands placed by No Child Left Behind and our own state Legislature. The WDE is currently in the process of building a data management system which could answer many of the data tracking needs for Summer Semester. The statewide assessment system is being modified and could potentially be changed to one that could more appropriately track individual student progress. In the meantime, pilot studies should be undertaken with selected districts to look at the effect of Summer Semester on student learning.

These studies could compare such items as learning gains for those who attended summer school versus those who did not (either parents elected not to send, or students who were very close in referring evaluative scores.) Over a three to four-year period, the graduation rates of students who did and did not attend summer school (but were eligible or close in evaluative scores) could be analyzed. Pre and post assessment before and after Summer Semester could measure student growth over the period.

When statewide evaluation of this program is more practical, it will be essential to its integrity to have in place an instrument that is common to all districts and students across the state that can measure growth in the same way. It is also critical to teachers and program evaluators to have this information returned in a timely fashion. To accomplish this, the Wyoming Department of Education will pursue the establishment of an on-line assessment system delivered through the WEdGate which provides immediate feedback to teachers on student proficiency in the form of Lexile scores, similar to grade equivalencies. Lexile scores can also be extrapolated from a number of student assessment tools districts are currently using, like Scholastic's Reading Interactive (SRI) assessment, and those from the NorthWestern Education Association (NWEA).

Caution must also be urged upon policymakers to understand that it will be very difficult to try to isolate the effect of one program (Summer Semester) on student learning when multiple programs are being initiated throughout districts, particularly in light of the pressures of No Child Left Behind.

### **Budget**

As proposed, the Summer Semester grant program is not competitive. If approved as presented to the legislature, districts meeting the expectations set forth in these grant application requirements should be able to receive funding for Summer Semester. Although ample and based on anecdotal projected costs, grant funds for Summer Semester may not in all instances reimburse districts for

100 percent of the expenses they may incur in their summer program. Summer Semester is not part of the Cost-based Block Grant Education Funding Model, but rather is a stand-alone, separate supplement to it.

Funding for Summer Semester is formula-driven with minimum levels set for elementary and/or secondary offerings in unusually small districts. Most districts that meet the programmatic requirements set forth in this document who plan to offer summer school to both elementary and secondary students will receive approximately \$500 per student. Funding through this grant will be limited to 10 percent of the district's most recent October 1 enrollment count, with specific elementary and secondary (10 percent) ceilings. This ten percent ceiling is not meant to limit a district's summer offerings, as almost all districts now have summer programs in place and can hopefully shift these currently obligated funds to expand offerings.

As part of the application process, districts will be asked to provide the WDE with estimates of the number of elementary and secondary students they intend to serve, and define the subjects offered, particularly in secondary. The WDE will review the application for substance and completeness, and respond to the district, either informing them of the funding they can expect, or requesting more information if deficiencies in program requirements are noted. Districts may subcontract with providers as long as their program is supervised by the District and still meets all grant requirements.

After the end of their summer session, districts will be reimbursed for services they delivered under the grant upon completion of statistical and programmatic evaluation instruments required by the WDE.

- ◆ The purpose of this grant is to help districts *build* upon what they already do in their summer programs. It is not meant to limit their offerings or the number of students they serve during the summer. It is hoped these additional dollars will replace funds districts now expend which could then be redirected to expand offerings.
- ◆ *Summer school is the place to try new, innovative teaching methods!* Perhaps some of the existing funds districts currently spend on summer school could be used to even further enhance the professional development of summer school teachers.
- ◆ Notify parents early (end of first semester) that their child may need to attend summer school. Give dates, length of session, expected results, etc.
- ◆ Research has shown that the most effective summer programs last longer throughout the summer season, with fewer hours per day rather than short, intensive sessions.
- ◆ Research also shows summer programs are more effective when they end close to the start of school. If possible within your community, try to schedule summer session toward the end rather than the start of the summer vacation.
- ◆ Does your community have an existent program that already successfully delivers summer educational programs, like a BOCES, a community college, or a 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning center? Don't rule out the possibility of contracting with these entities. As long as they meet needed grant requirements, they are a viable alternative to administering the program yourself.
- ◆ Work with other community programs to provide supports for families of students who need to attend summer school. For instance, could another entity provide preschool services for younger siblings?
- ◆ Identify needed supports that youth in summer programs could use, then work with other community programs to provide those supports. Perhaps include fun activities sponsored by your local Parks and Recreation or Arts Council, and utilize 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning centers to enhance your academic offerings. To keep students engaged, try to incorporate physical activities and field trips as part of your learning program.
- ◆ Food always encourages a good learning environment. The optimal offering would be breakfast, a snack, then lunch. Again look to community support groups to help supplement free and reduced lunch offerings.

- ◆ Any school district in the state can apply for the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) during summer. This program provides one meal and one snack for all eligible students, who do not necessarily have to be Title I students. Contact Katie Mordhorst at the WDE 777-6262 for more information. To find out how this worked for Natrona County, contact Mike Pyska, supervisor of food services.
  
- ◆ And speaking of Natrona County (they did this, too!), do you have trouble finding bus drivers interested in summer work? It may be because they have a lot of “down” time between the start and end of school. If this is the case, consider staggering start times at different sites to keep drivers busy and/or to segregate different student ages.
  
- ◆ Are there only a few students in a particular grade who need summer remediation? Try a multi-grade approach, and where practical, group students according to ability level.