Defining Technical Assistance Delivery for Summer Enrichment Programs

Current delivery and recommendations for effective Technical Assistance in supporting Summer Enrichment Programs

December 18, 2009
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Recommendations for Building the Capacity of Technical Assistance Providers to Support the Development of Quality Summer Learning Programming

In support of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation’s Summer Program Initiative, ASAPconnect staff researched the current and future technical assistance needs for summer programs. ASAPconnect defines technical assistance (TA) as ongoing, needs-driven support services to create effective and quality before and after school programs. See ASAPconnect Quality TA Framework for a full description of what constitutes quality TA (Attachment A).

As the Foundation supports the enhancement of summer programs, it is critical to build the capacity of technical assistance providers to provide services to strengthen the quality of summer programs. To this end, ASAPconnect gathered information and offers recommendations towards ensuring TA providers can best support these programs.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

ASAPconnect has sought to identify what infrastructure and support is necessary to build the capacity of TA providers at a statewide level to help summer programs achieve program quality. ASAPconnect staff visited 11 summer sites in 5 programs in both Northern and Southern California providing access to a range of partnerships and program models. Nineteen programs, representing 176 sites were selected from across the state and surveyed to gather information on TA needs and staff development delivery for the summer of 2009. Lastly, thirty-five TA providers were interviewed or surveyed to discern who offered TA to programs last year and what level of expertise exists in our current TA community. These efforts were conducted throughout the state between June and November of 2009 and addressed the following questions:

1) What are the core TA needs of organizations running summer programs?
2) What TA strategies are in place or could be in place to support these programs?
3) What is needed to build the capacity of TA providers to ensure programs achieve quality as the need and interest expands?

Below are the assumptions that helped to guide our research and craft our recommendations.

1) Afterschool stakeholders in California are interested in strengthening summer programming for young people.
2) Afterschool Stakeholders have a research based and tested model they can follow to address the characteristics that need to be in place to promote effective summer learning programs; this model is offered by the National Summer Learning Association.

3) Afterschool programs are ideal candidates for advancing quality summer learning centers in California.

4) Summer programs need a range of technical assistance in order to continue their efforts toward building quality programs.

5) Building capacity of TA providers is necessary to respond to the existing and growing number of summer programs.

6) To build the capacity of TA providers that speaks to best practices and shares a consistent message, the field needs a system or statewide process that leverages existing partnerships. See Guiding Principles (Attachment B).

7) There is a range of afterschool and community stakeholders that could be involved in a statewide process.

SECTION 2: LANDSCAPE OF THE FIELD

Profile of Sites Offering Summer Programming
ASAPconnect, along with the statewide Regional Leads, reviewed data of after school programs receiving supplemental funding to their ASES and/or 21st Century Community Learning Center after school grants from the California Department of Education. Of a total of 1,243 sites receiving supplemental funds, we have compiled demographic data of 468 after school sites that currently offer summer programming.

Ten of the eleven regions of after school are represented in this data summary. The sites are distributed evenly across the state, with 31% of the sites from the Northern Regions 1-4, 37% of the sites from Central Regions 5-8, and 32% of the sites from Southern Regions 9-11.

Student Demographics
A majority of the summer programs are serving students that are in need of additional support. Half of the schools are currently in Program Improvement (PI) status, with 71% of all the summer sites being in PI, at risk for PI, or former PI schools. Most of these sites are also serving students that are English learners. 82% of the summer sites have 30% or more of the regular school day students designated as English learners. 60% of the summer sites have at least half of the regular school day population identified as English learners.

Student Enrollment
According to Regional Lead data sample of 468 sites, there was a broad range of enrollment in the sites offering summer programming. Sites had as few as 4 enrolled students or as many as 3,668 students. These are the extremes, however. Nearly half, (49.5%) of the school sites have an enrollment of 400-699 students. Over one fourth (26%) of the sites have school enrollments of 700-999 students. 18.5% of sites had fewer than 400 students enrolled and 6% of sites had 1,000 or more enrolled students.
Range of Program Partnerships
Nineteen programs, representing over 176 summer sites were selected by ASAPconnect staff to respond to a brief survey this summer. Although the majority of programs are held at school sites, a few had programs at community centers. Eighty-one (81%) were stand-alone programs not held in conjunction with or after summer school. This was a last minute change for a number of programs, whose district cancelled summer school due to budget cuts, necessitating the afterschool program to step up and offer services for longer hours to support families. Many of these programs had co-located sites where two school sites would come together in one location. Sixty-seven (67%) of the programs were a partnership with the city or a community-based program.

SECTION 3: FINDINGS

QUESTION 1: What are the core TA needs of organizations running summer programs?

In order to understand what TA is needed to strengthen summer programs, we must first understand program challenges. Afterschool programs that run in the summer face a range of challenges that include facilities, school alignment, staffing, programming, budgeting and timing.

The following challenges surfaced during site visits, and through surveys to both TA providers and program staff.

Timing
A primary issue for programs running in the summer of 2009 concerned significant last minute changes at their host sites. Due to the state budgeting shortages, some schools cancelled their own summer school in June, leaving the afterschool program to fill in the gap. Other programs received notice of their supplemental funding in June, which led to programs having a late start and shortened planning time.

Lack of Planning and Staff Development Time
Some programs spend little time in preparation for their summer programming. Although some may start as early as January, many simply run their school year programs right up to the summer break with as little as one day to prepare. The average for most sites was one week to both plan and provide training focused on summer. This has an obvious impact on a program’s ability to create or adapt learning-integrated curriculum specific to summer.

Staff development for most programs was for one or two days. Key topics covered included behavior management, enrichment/curriculum, team building and summer scheduling. One interesting note is that a number of programs blended both youth and staff from two or more sites without focusing on working together effectively. When visited in mid-summer, three sites spoke to ongoing tensions between site staff brought together for their summer program.
Responding to Longer Days
For some after school programs it was a huge change to move from offering three hours per day to seven or eight hours per day during the summer. How do they fill the long, hot summer day with engaging programming? How do they staff the longer time? This necessitated more intensive planning and preparation. Some programs were overwhelmed with the challenge of procuring engaging curriculum they could utilize given a short window of time for staff training & planning. One program chose to do field trips for the majority of their four-week session to diminish the need to create summer specific curriculum.

Short Term Programs
Although six programs we talked to ran for 8-10 weeks, 19 programs ran for 2–6 weeks. This became a recruiting issue for some programs who had families looking for programming that spanned the full summer. It is also difficult for some programs to keep staff for such a short engagement.

Aligning Summer Activities to Support those of the School Year
Although some programs described their summer program design as similar to the school year, many noted significant differences:
- Over half of the summer programs were less academic-focused and instead offered more enrichment, stronger recreation components, and arts and music.
- Those who wanted to focus on academics did not have the time or access to find curriculum that was aligned with standards or the school year curriculum.
- Some programs switched their focused recruitment to be open to all students, whereas during the year they prioritized students far below basic/below basic in core subjects.
- Students in programs not linked to summer school had no homework, removing homework time, which is a staple academic component during the school year.
- Programs who chose to do project based learning or theme based activities struggled with having enough time for training, equipment and supplies for staff to carry out the program vision or activity ideas.

Budget
Due to delayed planning and state budget issues, some programs held back summer hiring until the last minute. Others noted challenges in having money for field trips, for transportation, or for supplies and equipment to do special projects. One program noted they could only get reimbursed for three hours per day but offered programming for six hours per day to meet the needs of their community. A Regional Lead noted that some programs wanted to, but were unable to offer a full day program due to budget cuts. Some programs supplemented their budget by charging fees. Lastly, budget cuts impacted ability to pay for custodial staff and utilities on site during summer program.

Staffing
Many programs said they used the same staff in the summer as they did during the school year. Those who reduced staff numbers during summer kept on their strongest or most senior staff.
**Staffing challenges included:**
- Little time put aside for staff training; TA providers rated the need for staff development as the number one priority.
- A number of programs merged two sites into one, which meant merging staff and forming new staff partnerships. There was little time for team building and it took a while for communication to get in place.
- New CBO or contracting partnerships were formed for the summer. The CBOs provided staff that didn’t know the site, community or students, creating additional challenges, such as behavior management.
- Inability to find staff wanting to work in the summer, accommodating summer plans or college schedules.
- Keeping staff motivated and engaged for longer hours, especially staff who were tired after working during the school year program.
- Ten-month administrative employees were unavailable in the summer.

**CASE STUDY: Think Together**

*Think Together* is a community-based organization (CBO) in Southern California who made a heroic effort to offer a quality program for children in Summer 2009. For one of their Regions, Orange County, they nearly doubled their enrollment, going from 6200 students during the school year to 11,000 for their five-week summer program in 2009.

**Staff Preparation and Consistent Programming:** A strategy that minimized staff preparation and created consistent programs included the development of three daily modules: literacy/academics lead by a certified teacher; sports and recreation utilizing a curriculum called CATCH; and a project-based social studies curriculum called “Around the World”. They had the challenge of needing to hire 200 additional staff just for the summer. Staff training focused on behavior management, summer policies and procedures and effective delivery strategies. Since teachers provided one of the three modules, the other program staff only needed to be proficient in the remaining two modules. Some staff specialized in one module making preparation even easier. Often two sites co-located at one location necessitating shared leadership and careful coordination. Quality Assurance Coaches were able to focus on keeping communication between co-located Site Coordinators pro-active.

**Programming Challenges**

Programs need help in preparation and delivery of engaging activities; especially curriculum that enables them to offer integrated learning opportunities. Programs mentioned:
- The need to identify “plug & play” or ready made curriculum as they have little prep time.
- A lack of academic focus since students had no homework and they did not have aligned curriculum or academic activities.
- A need for assistance with having enough fun and interesting activities to keep staff and students attending and engaged.
CASE STUDY: Realizing Amazing Potential (RAP)

Engaging Programming: RAP Before and After School Program in Lawndale at Rogers Middle School was literally vibrating with noise this past summer. These middle school students were engaged in high interest and engaging activities. Outside, in one courtyard a drum line rehearsed under the direction of a high-energy instructor. Just down the way, band practice was in session as students warmed up playing scales. In front of the school, a Flag Corps worked out to music and practiced new steps. In the gym, a large group of students played a new version of “keep away” that promoted teamwork. Staff were chosen based on their energy and interest in offering special clubs and activities for the youth. Even though two different middle school campuses came together for this four-week program, the youth were fully engaged and focused on working together.

Student Attendance
Summer programs had a range of attendance, with some having far fewer kids than the school year and some having far more. This can present structural and policy challenges.
Low enrollment was due to:
- Lack of visibility or communication with parents;
- Inconsistent attendance due to family plans;
- Conflicting family vacations;
- Families needing longer or different hours; and
- Family expectations that didn’t match program focus.

Facility issues
Access to the school facility when regular day summer school was not in session created some challenges for programs when administrators were not on site or programs had limited access to all areas of the campus.
- Several Regional Leads highlighted the challenge programs had in getting access to school sites and negotiating use of space with their Districts.
- Once on site there were not always enough appropriate outdoor spaces or air conditioning in inside spaces presenting problems due to the excessive summer heat;
- There was inconsistent access to water, multi-purpose rooms and classrooms to do small groups or specialized activities; and
- There was a need to share limited space with other programs located at the same site.

Question 2: What TA strategies are in place or could be in place to support these programs?

To get an answer to this question, we asked both TA providers and select program staff what TA they utilized in 2009, what TA was available, and what programs needed. In general, TA designed to support unique needs of summer programming does not appear to be very high on the radar of afterschool TA providers. The ASAPconnect provider directory shows that 35 (18%) TA providers listed summer enrichment as a
specialty out of the 191 total providers listed. Of the 31 TA provider survey respondents, only 14 have done intensive support to summer programs and 10 have done 1-5 days of support. Eleven of the 31 TA providers are in-house support. It appears that beyond a few consultants or training organizations or intermediaries, most summer support is provided by in-house lead staff, internal coaches or administrators.

**TA services that were provided for 2009 Summer Programs**

- TA providers, including Regional Leads, reported that the types of support they were most likely to deliver in order of priority were: staff training, staff coaching and providing resources, such as curriculum. See Bar Graph in Attachment C which shows survey results of the number of specific requests, by topic, made to technical assistance providers this past summer.
- Of the training that was offered, priorities included help to design summer schedules, strategies for enrichment, putting policies and procedures in place, team building, addressing behavior management issues, youth development and utilizing new strategies for recreation or group games.
- Ongoing support provided by program administrators during program included informal check-ins or supervisor meetings. Few programs conducted training once the program cycle began. Instead, site support focused on logistics and trouble-shooting. Aim High was an exception. (see Case Study below)
- In general there was minimal district or regional support for summer programs. The support that was given tended to focus on grants management or policies and procedures.

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**CASE STUDY: Aim High**

*Aim High*, a youth serving organization in San Francisco describes itself as one of the largest academic summer program providers in the Bay Area. They received a 2008 Excellence in Summer Learning Award from Center for Summer Learning at John Hopkins University (former partner with NSLA). Aim High ran 12 sites in 2009 throughout the Bay Area for middle school students.

**Staff Support Strategies:** Staff are supervised by master teachers and receive training and tools for how to design project based and standards aligned curriculum. In some cases they do team teaching and receive 2 hours of weekly training and support. They also do peer observation using an observation form, which is followed by a debriefing to share lessons learned.

**Program Description:** The site visit to Aim High at St. Paul’s Episcopal School in Oakland showed young people deeply engaged in activities and had ownership of the program. Aim High is designed to prevent summer learning loss. To that end they offer four modules that youth rotate through during the summer program day. Utilizing project based learning strategies, students take math, science, humanities (English and social studies) and an Issues & Choices class that looks at health issues and current events. Students were engaged in a variety of interesting activities from figuring out how many pennies will sink a boat, creating a family tree, to doing a presentation on how the inner ear works. All students were responsible for working both in groups and independently to complete projects by the end of their five-week program. Although there is a high teacher to student ratio and there may be staffing challenges, **this engaging model would do well when replicated at ASES and 21st CCLC Sites.** (See Attachment E to review the Aim High Fact Sheet, which illustrates the impact they have on youth in their program.)
Range of Topics or Support Needed by Summer Programs
The following table highlights the range of topics or supports both program staff and TA providers highlight as priorities for summer programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>TA Needs or Requests</th>
<th>TA Strategies for Delivery</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-active Planning</td>
<td>▪ Information on and examples of model programs and tools</td>
<td>√ Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Summer scheduling support for longer days</td>
<td>√ Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Seamless, year-round planning</td>
<td>√ Coaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Summer staffing &amp; hiring</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Curriculum rotation/modules</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Vision for summer program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Development</td>
<td>▪ Enrichment activities</td>
<td>√ Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Team building</td>
<td>√ Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Behavior management</td>
<td>√ Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Youth development</td>
<td>√ Broker Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Recreation, sports &amp; games</td>
<td>√ Mentoring</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Standards-aligned curriculum that is linked to school year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Project based learning</td>
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<td>▪ Youth leadership</td>
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<td>▪ Turning afterschool into summer “camp”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Staff management and coaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Cross-aged programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of Summer Curriculum</td>
<td>▪ Development of engaging curriculum that integrates learning with a project based or culminating event</td>
<td>√ Training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Development of standards aligned curriculum that addresses summer learning loss</td>
<td>√ Consulting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Development of “plug-and-play” or easily adaptable curriculum</td>
<td>√ Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Field Trips</td>
<td>▪ Field trips or camping – exploring the community and beyond</td>
<td>√ Broker Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Partnerships</td>
<td>▪ Supporting strategic and local partnerships &amp; systems development (parks, libraries)</td>
<td>√ Training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Creating a functional and collaborative partnership that is sustainable</td>
<td>√ Consulting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Strategies for successful partnering between community based organizations &amp; district programs</td>
<td>√ Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Strategies for marketing &amp; recruitment</td>
<td>√ Broker Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Retention for short-term programs</td>
<td>√ Mentoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational Support</td>
<td>√ Training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>√ Consulting</td>
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<td>√ Broker Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
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| Grants management |
| Policies/procedures |
| Strategies for partnering with the District/School Site to meet their needs |
| Sustainability; leveraging funds and increasing access and sources of funding |
| Risk management re: summer heat |
| Volunteer recruitment |
| Summer staffing |

**SECTION 4: RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO BUILD FIELD CAPACITY**

**Question 3:** What is needed to build the capacity of TA providers to ensure programs achieve quality as the need and interest expands?

A primary outcome to our research is in noting that TA providers are not particularly focused on strengthening program quality for summer programs. Efforts that focus on building a sustainable system of support for summer will need to consider what elements are needed to promote such a system including leadership, planning, coordination, information systems and a collective commitment to quality.

In considering what it might take to promote sustainability, we looked at work done by The Wallace Foundation. A 2008 Wallace perspective, *A Place to Grow and Learn: A Citywide Approach to Building and Sustaining Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities* suggests that there are six “action elements” for achieving a coordinated approach to improving out-of-school time (OST). These steps are worth noting as we consider what it will take to impact a larger system of TA and raise visibility of summer programs.

While each city in the Wallace initiative has shaped its system-building approach to its particular needs and circumstances, all of them seek to assemble six building blocks of durable OST systems:

- **Committed leadership** – including top political, school, community and OST leaders, to secure funding and other resources and shape policies;
- **Multi-year planning** - to set goals and priorities, develop ways to hold key players accountable for results and identify needed resources;
- **A public or private coordinating entity** – to manage the development of plans, link disparate OST players, build citywide attention and support for OST, and ensure that plans and performance stay on track; citywide support for OST;
- **Reliable information** – information systems capable of providing reliable data about participation trends and family needs;
- **Expanding participation** - an emphasis on expanded participation by young people;
- **A commitment to quality programming** - grounded in the research-supported idea that children are likeliest to realize out-of-school time’s benefits when programs are strong.
It is worth examining the above building blocks as The David and Lucile Packard Foundation looks at what it will take to build the capacity of TA for summer programs. It is critical to look at the role of leadership, planning and coordination in creating a sustainable effort. In particular, how can the Summer Consortium Group and other organizations at the table be expanded to include other key stakeholders? Will it take a specific and separate coordinating entity to carry on the focus and work of strengthening the quality of existing summer programs or will this be integrated into existing afterschool systems of support?

This report has found that TA delivery for summer programs is neither comprehensive nor consistent. What we have learned from our work with afterschool programs is that it took considerable time and effort to surface best practices and model programs for the field of afterschool. It will be necessary to apply the same rigor and patience to this effort to promote field engagement and ownership in enhancing the quality of summer programs with a possible focus on addressing students' learning loss. Ultimately it will be necessary to define who holds the commitment to quality summer programs and can put building blocks in place including offering quality TA for the range of summer programs in California.

The following are our list of recommendations for The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Summer Practice Consortium to consider in addressing TA provider capacity to pro-actively support summer programs. These recommendations have been vetted by members of the Summer Consortium Group (Attachment D).

**Recommendation #1:**
Build awareness of a range of stakeholders in the afterschool field for the need to create quality summer programming to enlist broader ownership and support.

**Possible Strategies:**
1) Join existing afterschool and educational initiatives to bring a focus on raising the profile and creating a vision for intentional, high quality summer programming that offers integrated learning opportunities.
2) Partner with afterschool stakeholders to create messaging on how quality summer programming can make a difference in the lives of youth, families and communities and to highlight successful California programs.
3) Partner with the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) to share research and strategies for building quality programming.
4) Engage in a systems level conversation with statewide partners such as the libraries and park systems to look at program integration opportunities.
5) Promote field ownership by inviting promising sites and other stakeholders to help define quality programming for the field in California.
6) Partner with Legislative Task Force on Summer and Intersession Enrichment to be sure they understand and address the need for technical assistance as they address strategies for expanded and improved summer programs for young people.
Recommendation #2:
Build technical assistance providers’ capacity to strengthen program and site level practice utilizing models, promising practices, curriculum and strategies identified for supporting programs in implementing quality summer practices.

Possible Strategies:
1) Partner with ASAPconnect to promote a focus on summer through networking, training and dialogue that leverages current field expertise.
2) Partner with NSLA and ASAPconnect to offer training for trainers to TA providers that will focus on NSLA tools and components of quality programs.
3) Support rollout of Quality Self Assessment Tool with an emphasis on the summer supplement.
4) Create cadre of regional technical assistance providers with expertise who can then build the capacity of other local TA providers including in-house trainers in larger programs.
5) Replicate TA strategies and build from lessons learned in pilot process.
6) Build the capacity of Regional Leads and their staff to serve the unique needs of summer programs including budgeting with Supplemental funding and accessing other sources of funding.
7) Work with NSLA to promote use of the NSLA Quality Matrix and Program Improvement System.

Recommendation #3:
Identify or create tools and resources that TA providers can utilize and summer programs can access with a minimum of training in a range of locations and programs.

Possible Strategies:
1) Partner with statewide and national organizations such as NSLA, California After School Resource Center (CASRC), ASAPconnect, California After School Demonstration Projects (CASDP), Nutrition Education Leadership Learning Community (NELLC) and California School Age Consortium (CalSAC) to identify curriculum and tools that can be accessed by programs.
2) Utilize tools created during the pilot or found at promising sites, including thematic programming created last summer with local library and park partners.
3) Promote intentional discussion and peer support through ongoing convenings, with a focus on observing promising practices before and during the summer and doing ongoing planning and preparation.
4) Develop a package of services and tools that programs can utilize with little preparation or training.
5) Work with organizations such as Aim High, YMCA or non-profits offering specialized summer camps to replicate their models and bring in highly engaging, learning-integrated curriculum and projects that summer programs can utilize.
6) Provide samples of key documents including staff development plans, curriculum and lesson plans, budget templates, partnership agreements, evaluation plans and measurement tools.
**Recommendation #4:**
Increase access to TA provider services with a particular focus on addressing summer program needs and opportunities.

**Possible Strategies:**
1) Partner with Regional Leads and large organizations to increase access to training and resources that focus on quality summer programming.
2) Continue to populate database of TA providers through the ASAPconnect Directory to identify those who provide summer program support and link them to requesting sites.
3) Support creation of professional development tracks that focus on quality summer learning at existing statewide or regional conferences.
4) Support the development of TA provider capacity at regional and local levels.
5) Promote a larger conversation with possible summer statewide partners, such as libraries and parks to exchange and coordinate technical assistance opportunities.

**Recommendation #5:**
Along with continuing to build awareness by linking to existing systems, there is also a need to focus on more long-term system integration.

**Possible Strategies:**
1) Bring a more intentional focus on promoting summer specific TA to the work that is already being done to align and strengthen afterschool TA support by CDE, Regional Leads and ASAPconnect.
2) Link to work being done to promote workforce pathways and partnerships.
3) Build on statewide partnership development in pilot process, including linking with statewide partners' planning timeline and processes.