



Summer Learning Design



As momentum grows to replace seat time with competency-based credit, Alliance partners are sharing tools, frameworks, and pathways that define and support powerful learning experiences for youth and young adults whenever and wherever they happen. In 2025, Horizons National and the National Summer Learning Association received a “moonshot” grant from Remake Learning, another Alliance partner, to leverage the open-source tools developed by XQ Institute to support interest-driven, real-world learning for high school students.



Partnering with Allegheny Partners for Out-of-School Time (APOST), the Alliance partners launched the Summer Learning Design pilot with five local out-of-school sites from across the Horizons National network and Allegheny County. Youth and staff from summer learning programs were engaged in the use of XQ design principles, including exploration of XQ’s competency framework and learning design tools. Previously, XQ’s evidence-based framework and approach had only been tested and used in the school and district settings. However, positive youth development principles and research help undergird the materials so they are well-poised to be readily applied in OST contexts.

By testing/experimenting with competency- and project-based learning projects co-designed by teachers and students using XQ Institute’s suite of tools and resources (Design Principles, Competency Framework, Learning Experiences Design), program providers worked to improve practice by challenging and enabling teachers and community-based providers who were also summer youth employers to incorporate high-quality competency-building opportunities for high school students.

This pilot is part of an ongoing commitment of Alliance Partners to leverage summer as an opportunity to co-design interest-driven learning experiences, close opportunity gaps, and explore summer and OST learning as the basis for credit-bearing opportunities.



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