



EDUCATION

***Making Summer Count:  
How Summer Programs Can Boost  
Children's Learning***

# *Open Question*

*What practices lead to effective summer learning program that improve student outcomes?*

# ***Summer Learning Loss Is Cumulative and Contributes Substantially to the Achievement Gap***

- Each fall, on average, students perform one month behind where they performed in the spring
- Low-income students particularly lose ground in reading
  - Higher income students maintain or gain
- Loss is cumulative over time, contributing substantially to achievement gap

# ***Summer Program Participation Can Improve Student Achievement***

- **Programs can reduce summer learning losses and even lead to achievement gains**
- **Voluntary, mandatory, and home-based summer reading programs all found to have positive effects**
- **Studies have found effects of summer learning programs endure for 2 years post-program**
  - **No studies estimate benefits beyond 2 years**
- **Not all summer learning programs studied produced achievement gains**

# ***Program Quality, Enrollment, and Attendance Are Critical to Achieving Benefits***

- **Research indicates certain program characteristics are linked to student achievement gains**
  - **Smaller class sizes & individualized instruction**
  - **Involving parents**
- **Expert opinion points to best program practice**
  - **High-quality instructors**
  - **Curriculum that matches student needs**
  - **Early planning**
- **Students must attend to reap benefits!**

# ***Providers Identified Strategies for Boosting Enrollment and Attendance***

- **Remove structural barriers**
  - **Provide transportation**
  - **Offer full-day programming**
  - **Involve and educate parents early**
- **Entice students**
  - **Engaging enrichment activities (also reduces the opportunity gap)**
  - **Food (breakfast, lunch, snacks)**
  - **Camp-like atmosphere**
  - **Experiential learning**

# ***Key District Challenges in Implementing Summer Learning***

- **Dedicating funding**
  - **Daily summer cost lower than daily school year cost but it remains an additional cost to districts**
- **Achieving high attendance rates**
- **Determining program effectiveness**
- **Staffing to ensure early planning**
- **Logistics**
  - **Timely materials delivery**
  - **Efficient transportation**

# ***Some Districts Are Committed to Providing Summer Learning Programs***

- **Programs typically require creative funding**
  - **Resource braiding**
  - **Partnerships with CBO community**
- **Some districts employ unique hiring practices to improve quality of summer teaching staff**
- **Districts have seen benefits**
  - **Grade promotion and retention**
  - **Improvements from spring to fall**
  - **School improvement**



# *Recommendations for Providers*

- Consider partnerships when developing summer learning programs
  - Districts, external providers, community-based organizations, city agencies, foundations
- Invest in qualified, dedicated staff and early planning
- Embed promising practices into summer learning programs

# Making Summer Count

How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning

JENNIFER SLOAN MCCOMBS • CATHERINE H. AUGUSTINE  
HEATHER L. SCHWARTZ • SUSAN J. BODILLY • BRIAN MCINNIS  
DAHLIA S. LICHTER • AMANDA BROWN CROSS



**Available for free download:**

**[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND\\_MG1120.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1120.pdf)**



EDUCATION