

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

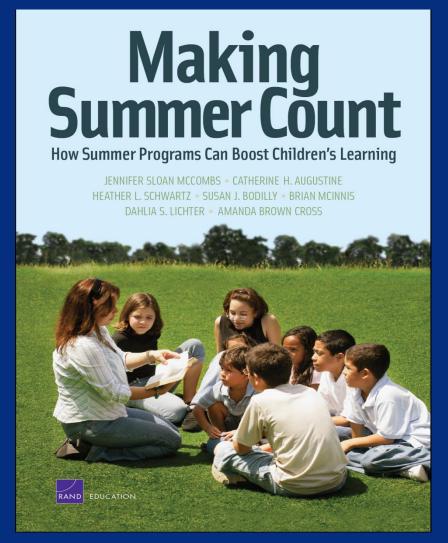
- Dedicating funding
 - Daily summer cost lower than daily school year cost but it remains an additional cost to districts
- Achieving high attendance rates
- Determining program effectiveness
- Staffing to ensure early planning
- Logistics
 - Timely materials delivery
 - Efficient transportation

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 <u>early</u> planning
- Embed promising practices into summer learning programs



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