

Assessing and Reducing Summer Loss of Learning

In this report, Hanover Research discusses how best to measure and counteract the summer loss of learning commonly observed in K-12 education. The report examines the issue of which subject areas are most affected by summer loss of learning, as well as which student populations are most vulnerable to such losses. Our discussion covers characteristics of effective summer learning programs, along with short profiles of interesting programs observed at other urban school systems.

Introduction

The observation that students returning from summer vacation need to spend time reviewing material covered in the previous academic year is almost ubiquitous. The phenomenon of summer learning loss is indeed present in American students, and, as this report indicates, it is concentrated in students with lower socio-economic status (SES). As such, school systems are increasingly implementing programs to combat summer learning loss, generally in addition to more traditional programs that focus on providing remedial education.

While these two ends can certainly be pursued in the same program, they are distinct goals. This report focuses, to the extent possible, on summer programs that are not strictly intended to provide remedial instruction for students at risk of failure or non-promotion, as these programs do not align with the request to focus on the area of preventing loss of learning over the summer. Thus, such programs as Chicago Public School's Summer Bridge, while cited as an effective summer learning program in such reports as Terzian et al., are not addressed in this report.¹

The majority of programs and studies consulted for this report focus on younger students—indeed, Miller and Donohue note that “much of the research on [summer learning loss] focuses on children in elementary and middle school.”² High school summer courses tend to be aimed more at credit recovery efforts. This perhaps reflects the theory that providing children with better support when younger will dramatically impact later educational success due to the foundational quality of elementary education, particularly in reading. As Kim observes, “fourth-grade presents a key transitional point in schooling because it is often assumed that students have mastered the foundational skills needed to decode individual words.”³ In short, students move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” making successful educational attainment at this stage extremely important.

This report is structured in two main sections. The first provides information on placing and assessing the loss of learning in the student population, discussing where learning loss can be found and how it can best be measured. The second section identifies characteristics of effective summer learning programs and provides short

¹ N.B. The Chicago Public Schools' “Keeping Kids Learning” summer program is included in this report. Terzian, M., Moore, K., Hamilton, K. 2009. “Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth.” The Wallace Foundation. <http://wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/Effective-and-Promising-Summer-Learning-Programs.pdf>

² Donohue, N. C. and Miller, B. M. “Stemming Summer Learning Loss.” 2008. *The New England Journal of Higher Education*. <http://www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Donohue%20Miller%20Summer.pdf>

³ Kim, J. 2006. “Effects of a Voluntary Summer Reading Intervention on Reading Achievement: Results from a Randomized Field Trial.” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28:4, p. 338.

See also Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., Olson, L. 2007. “Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap.” *American Sociological Review*, 72:4, pp. 167 – 180.

profiles of such programs in five urban school districts with large proportions of low-SES students.

Key Findings:

- ❖ Summer learning loss is both present and concentrated among low-SES students.
 - Learning loss in reading-related skills has been found to be most severe in low-SES student populations, while middle- and upper-SES students actually tend to show gains in reading-related skills over the summer.
 - Learning loss in math-related skills is more evenly distributed, being present in students from all backgrounds.
- ❖ The “learning gap” results from both summer learning loss among low-SES students and summer learning gains by middle- and upper-SES students.
- ❖ The greater commonality of reading in the home as opposed to math problem solving is considered to be a key explanation for the observed differences in summer learning loss.
- ❖ It is relatively difficult to measure summer learning loss due to the question of timing in the administration of diagnostic tests.
 - “Sandwiching” the summer period as tightly as possible with diagnostic tests is recommended.
 - No other means of accurately measuring summer learning loss using other available data were observed.
- ❖ Characteristics of effective summer learning programs include:
 - Small course sizes
 - Well-structured, high-quality curricula provided by teachers particularly selected for the program
 - Aligning curricula and goals for summer learning with the curricula and goals for learning in the academic years surrounding a given summer
 - Occupying as much of the summer period as possible
 - Establishing partnerships with other organizations in the surrounding communities
 - Ensuring the involvement of parents

Assessing and Placing Loss of Learning

In order to better combat the loss of learning over the summer, it is necessary to have an understanding of both where learning loss occurs in the population and the degree of the problem itself. This section first addresses the question of “who” is most affected by summer learning loss before providing some guidance on measuring the loss of learning that can be attributed to the “traditional” summer vacation.

Locus of Observed Summer Learning Loss

Numerous studies and reports have observed both that summer learning loss exists and that it is concentrated in low-SES students.⁴ McCombs et al., in summarizing a large body of work on this topic, state this concisely: “Research indicates that, on average, students lose skills over the summer, particularly in mathematics. However, not all students experience ‘average’ losses, and summer learning loss disproportionately affects low-income students.”⁵ This disproportional effect of summer then contributes, in a cumulative fashion year-over-year, to the commonly-observed learning “gap” between students in different SES levels.

However, it should be acknowledged that the learning “gap” between lower- and upper-SES students may not be chiefly caused by learning loss, per se. In fact, when looking just at the summer, a potentially greater source of inequality in learning achievement comes from the possibility that middle- and upper-SES students may not be losing learning at all, particularly in reading. Indeed, it has been observed that they may continue to gain knowledge and abilities relevant to some areas of reading.⁶ Again, turning to McCombs et al.: “While their higher-income peers, on average, post gains in reading, low-income students show losses at the end of the summer.”⁷ Alexander et al. note that, in their study, middle-income students largely tread water during the summer, neither gaining nor losing ground.⁸ Thus, the fact that there is still, on average, a decline amongst all students can likely be attributed to the fact that there are more lower-SES students losing learning than there are upper-SES students gaining.

⁴ See, for example:

Heyns, B. 1978. “Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling.” New York: Academic Press;

Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., and Greathouse, S. 1996. “The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review,” *Review of Educational Research*, 66:3, pp. 227–268;

Black, S. “What Did You Learn Last Summer?” *American School Board Journal*, February 2005, pp. 38 – 40; Alexander et al. *Op. cit.*

⁵ McCombs, J. Augustine, C., Schwartz, H., Bodilly, S., McInnis, B., Lichter, D., and Brown Cross, A. 2011.

“Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs can Boost Children’s Learning.” RAND Corporation, p. xv.

⁶ Alexander et al. *Op. cit.*, pp. 170 – 171.

⁷ McCombs et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁸ Alexander et al. *Op. cit.*, pp. 170 – 171.

There are a variety of explanations provided for the different effects of summer on reading knowledge, including the observations that wealthier students have both greater access to libraries (or to books in general) and parents who are more able to assist them in learning due to the parents' generally higher levels of education.⁹ The general explanation for the universal trend of mathematics knowledge losses focuses on the fact that, for students at all SES levels, there is likely to be more book reading going on in the home than math problem solving—as Harris and Sass indicate, “It is often suggested that reading scores are more likely to be influenced by factors outside of school; students may read books in their free time, but they seldom work math problems for enjoyment.”¹⁰

Research additionally indicates that, especially in early childhood, in-school learning rates are largely equal amongst students of different SES levels.¹¹ This suggests that schools may be doing a better job at providing learning opportunities to low-SES students than their achievement levels often suggest, with losses of knowledge over the summer being a main contributor to observed differences in performance levels. As these differences become more relevant to all parties in the era of high-stakes testing, finding a means for schools to counteract this learning loss so that they can better exhibit their true effect on children becomes all the more important. This logically leads school districts to create programs to counteract the observed summer learning loss. However, to correctly gauge the extent of the problem in one's district and to evaluate the success of any implemented program, it is also necessary to have a way to measure what happens to student learning specifically over the summer. Unfortunately, this is perhaps more easily said than done.

Means of Measuring Summer Learning Loss

In order to properly obtain and interpret data concerning the extent of learning loss among students during the summer, the issue of test timing—how many days from the beginning and end of the traditional school year the diagnostic test is given—must be acknowledged. If the test is given too far from the start or end of the year, then the proper interpretation of the results can be significantly confounded. This was noted by Downey et al. in their 2004 analysis of the idea that schools are the “great equalizer” in the overall, year-round effort to educate children.¹² Downey et al. go on to indicate that most previous analyses, including the seminal 1978 study by Barbara Heyns addressing summer loss of learning in Atlanta students, do not try to

⁹ “Summer Slide: 5 Questions for Karl Alexander.” NBC News Education Nation.

<http://www.educationnation.com/index.cfm?objectid=32039792-B232-11E0-9ADA000C296BA163&aka=0>

¹⁰ Harris, D. and Sass, T. “What Makes for a Good Teacher and Who Can Tell?” National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, Working Paper 30, September 2009, pp. 20 – 21.

<http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/1001431-what-makes-for-a-good-teacher.pdf>

¹¹ Downey, D., von Hippel, P., Broh, B. 2004. “Are Schools the Great Equalizer? Cognitive Inequality during the Summer Months and the School Year.” *American Sociological Review*, 69:5, pp. 613-635; Alexander et al. *Op. cit.*

¹² Downey et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 617.

account for this problem, instead reporting results based on whatever fall and spring test data could be obtained.¹³ While this does not appear, on review, to affect the *direction* of the observed changes in knowledge, it very likely affects their *magnitude*—summer learning (loss) would be biased positively (negatively), as students have had some time back in the classroom by the time they take the test.

Taking the previous into consideration, it is apparent that obtaining accurate measures of summer learning loss requires the testing days to sandwich the summer period as tightly as possible. It would be difficult to create a sound method to mathematically correct for any significant deviation from testing at the yearly endpoints, as even if one can determine learning rates over a year or a semester, there is the possibility that learning does not happen at a constant rate for all students within those periods. That is, students may very quickly (re)acquire knowledge at the beginning of the school year and then more slowly learn as time goes by, or they may exhibit periodic “bursts” of learning, or they could follow some other pattern particular to a given teacher or subject. Acquiring this granular knowledge of student learning rates would likely be prohibitively costly, especially in contrast to simply conducting tests at (or at least in very close proximity to) the yearly endpoints.

Having addressed the issue of assessment timing, there remains the question of what assessments to use. Articles relevant to the question of measuring learning loss have indicated the use of a range of tests in order to obtain spring-fall difference data. Examples of tests referenced in articles encountered while researching this report are as follows (in no particular order):

- ❖ Northwest Evaluation Association – Measures of Academic Progress (both math- and reading-related)
- ❖ Iowa Test of Basic Skills (both math- and reading-related)
- ❖ Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
- ❖ Basic Reading Inventory
- ❖ Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test
- ❖ California Achievement Test (both math- and reading-related)
- ❖ Fennema-Sherman Mathematics Attitude Scale¹⁴

These are all standardized tests that appear available for use by any school system, and the same grade level test (where relevant) could be administered multiple times to allow for comparison between the spring and fall periods. It could also be possible for school districts to develop their own test instruments. However, what does appear to be necessary is that a testing regime along these lines is implemented—this is the only reliable way to measure learning loss over the summer. No evidence was

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ This scale is not itself a measure of learning loss, but it is useful in determining attitudes towards mathematics that can affect the degree and rate of learning in the subject.

found of methods, either used by researchers or other districts, to measure the extent of this problem using other kinds of data. Indeed, one study that could have benefitted from developing such a method specifically did not try to do so, instead choosing to report cumulative year-over-year changes in knowledge for the period in question.¹⁵

¹⁵ Alexander et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 169. As this was a study aimed chiefly at evaluating the long-term effects of summer learning loss in early years, the study remained viable; the years for which summer learning loss could not be measured began with the summer between fifth and sixth grade.

Examples of Efforts to Reduce Summer Learning Loss

In assembling this section, a focus was maintained on programs in urban school districts with large proportions of low-SES students. Before addressing the programs themselves, some discussion concerning the characteristics of effective summer learning programs is provided. It should be noted that these programs may incorporate aspects of remedial education that are not strictly applicable to the goal of combating the loss of learning. However, as noted in the introduction, none of the programs here mentioned have a strict focus on remedial education or only working with students who would otherwise not be promoted. Additionally, as requested, the programs here generally go beyond the classroom environment, although most still incorporate classroom time.

It should be noted that precise details on what qualifies a student to participate in these programs generally were not found. Some literature, such as that for the Dallas program, provides information that suggests that the program is aimed at struggling students, but specific qualification requirements were not noted.¹⁶ As the negative effect of summer learning loss has been shown to be cumulative beyond the first year of enrollment, this action in itself likely significantly targets the program to the low-SES population that is most at risk of summer learning loss.

Characteristics of Effective Programs as Suggested by Research

Although some of these recommendations are derived from analyses incorporating more traditional summer school programs, they are still useful to keep in mind, as traditional classroom-based learning can be a useful part of a successful summer learning program. Additionally, as with all lists of “effective” or “best” practices, one must be aware of the context of one’s own situation, which may make practices found effective elsewhere less effective in one’s own school system. These observations, though, are themselves relatively general in nature and thus less likely to be affected by this concern.

As with many activities aimed at promoting academic achievement, the idea of small **class sizes** as being central to promoting learning is present in the summer learning literature. It is recommended that the academic course portions of summer programs should strive to minimize course size, incorporate teaching assistants, and even

¹⁶ “Students attending the camps were, in many cases, those with the greatest academic need. Eighteen percent had failed one or more courses during the previous school year, with more than half failing the state-mandated assessment in math and another 46 percent failing in language arts. Traditional methods had not produced the desired results—children who were actively engaged in learning and able to meet the academic standards for their grade levels—and now was the chance to try a fresh approach. Remaining spaces at the camp were filled with other interested Dallas ISD elementary students.” See “Thriving Minds Summer Camp 2010.” Big Thought, p. 4.
<http://www.bigthought.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KxVOo2f-mHM%3d&tabid=263>

provide **individualized instruction** when possible. One report, after reviewing a range of programs, suggests that “[class] sizes of about 10-15 students tended to be most effective.”¹⁷

To further promote successful learning, the provision of **well-structured, high-quality curricula by teachers particularly selected for the program** appears recommendable. McCombs et al. note that various programs selected teachers in different ways, including: focusing on teachers who would be **well-motivated in the summer**; looking for teachers who would be comfortable using a more **“active” approach** to learning; having teachers answer **essay questions**; asking teachers to conduct **mock lessons**; focusing on teachers from **high-performing schools**; and considering the **match of teacher demographics to student demographics** for role-modeling purposes.¹⁸ This last point is additionally supported by research that suggests that schools with differences in racial composition between students and teachers may have worse learning results for students.¹⁹

Effort should also be made to **align curricula and goals for summer learning with the curricula and goals for learning in the academic years surrounding a given summer**.²⁰ While the curricula and learning goals ought to align, the means of learning should reflect new ways of engagement between students and teachers, bolstering classroom learning with significant outside-the-classroom activities.²¹ As noted by Terzian et al.: “Successful summer learning programs supplement academic instruction with enrichment activities that are relevant and engaging to children and youth. [...] Interactive forms of instruction such as immersion and experiential learning help to keep students engaged in the material.”²²

There is also evidence that **programs should try to occupy as much of the summer period as possible**—they must exhibit a sufficient length to have a chance of affecting student learning. McLaughlin and Pitcock indicate that effective programs generally include at least 80 hours of programming during the summer, and Black suggests that “[stretching] summer school out longer ‘reduces the gaps’ between the regular school year and provides students with more continuity in learning.”²³ The 80 hour minimum would align with a 4-week program of half-day periods, though half-day programs may not be ideal for poorer families with working

¹⁷ Quote from Terzian et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 17; see also McCombs et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁸ See both McCombs et al. *Op. cit.*, pp. 64-65 & McLaughlin, B. and Pitcock, S. “Building Quality in Summer Learning Programs: Approaches and Recommendations.” The Wallace Foundation, September 2009, p. 3. <http://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/images/Building-Quality-in-Summer-Learning-Programs.pdf>

¹⁹ These results may emerge from such factors as different dialects between students and teachers, especially in language and reading classes, and not strictly from race- or ethnicity-based differences in treatment as such. See Entwistle, D. and Alexander, K. 1994. “The Gender Gap in Math: Its Possible Origins in Neighborhood Effects.” *American Sociological Review* 59, pp. 822-838 (cited in Downey et al. *Op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.)

²⁰ McCombs et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Terzian et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

²³ Black. *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

parents who additionally benefit from the ancillary childcare aspect of summer learning programs.²⁴ The durations within the set of programs evaluated by McCombs et al. varied from “five to six hours a day, four to five days a week, and five to six weeks in total.”²⁵

School districts should also **establish partnerships with other organizations in their communities**, an effort that can both lower costs and provide superior activities for the children involved.²⁶ Terzian et al. go so far as to say that “long-term, community partnerships are critical to insuring and sustaining program success.”²⁷ Partnering organizations bring expertise that the school staff may be lacking in areas distinct from didactic instruction, and their involvement can additionally expand the range of spaces to which a summer learning program has access, increasing the opportunities for learning outside of the traditional summer school’s classroom environment.

Finally, ensuring the **involvement of parents** in the summer learning process is suggested by multiple authors. Terzian et al. note that programs involving parents “may be more likely to have positive impacts on children.”²⁸ McCombs emphasizes that involving parents can help “both to ensure high attendance rates and to reinforce learning in the home.”²⁹ Certainly, the involvement of parents in the education of their children would generally be expected to bring benefits, and this is a common goal of many school systems for children at all ages and levels of ability.

Examples of Programs by District

Below we present five sample programs from major urban school districts, located in the cities of Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Jackson, Dallas, and Chicago. We selected a variety of programs which are somewhat unique when compared to standard traditional program models. In most cases, available information concerning them was relatively brief, though it is still possible to get a feel for the nature of the programs included.

Pittsburgh Public Schools

Pittsburgh’s “Summer Dreamers Academy” began in July 2010 and was initially limited to rising 6th-8th grade students. In 2011, it expanded to allow all K-8th grade

²⁴ Terzian et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁵ McCombs et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁶ McLaughlin and Pitts. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁷ Terzian et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ McCombs et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

students to enroll.³⁰ While in attendance at the five-week “camp,” students receive instruction in math, reading, and social skills. The students, often low-SES, also have the ability to participate in a wide range of other activities, like kayaking, judo, and dance, for which they would otherwise not likely have the necessary means. The program is available to all students free of charge and features several practices that align well with the literature, including a low student-teacher ratio,³¹ full-day programming (8:30am to 4:00pm, five days a week),³² and collaboration with a variety of community organizations.³³

In 2010, the camp focused primarily on providing literacy instruction.³⁴ An evaluation of the 2010 program by the National Summer Learning Association found that it was very effective at preventing the loss of learning in the populations most vulnerable to learning loss over the summer. In fact, participating students actually increased their literacy performance on average. As the program enrolled mainly students at risk of learning loss, this was deemed a very encouraging finding.³⁵

Indianapolis Public Schools

Indianapolis Public Schools offers the “Summer Advantage Academic Camp” for K-8th grade students. This five-week, full-day program provides instruction in “reading, math, music, art, drama, and physical education.” A “Mentor Friday” program brings in community leaders who share insights with participating students.³⁶

The Summer Advantage camp structure is provided by Summer Advantage USA, a non-profit organization that “[provides] elementary and middle school students living in under-resourced communities with research-based summer learning programs focused on academic gains.”³⁷ The programs are administered by local teachers and

³⁰ “Summer Programs.” Pittsburgh Public Schools.

<http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/6066201221115524147/blank/browse.asp?A=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&C=63364&6066201221115524147Nav=|5560|5561|&NodeID=5561>

³¹ McConnell Schaarsmith, A. “City Schools' Summer Dreamers Camp Ranks High.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 13, 2011. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/11164/1153309-53-0.stm>

³² “Summer Dreamers Academy – 2011 Camp Guide.” Pittsburgh Public Schools.

http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/6066201221115524147/lib/6066201221115524147/PPS_SDA_2011_Camp_Guide.pdf

³³ “Summer Dreamers Academy – Activities.” Pittsburgh Public Schools.

<http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/6066201221115524147/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=63434&6066201221115524147Nav=|5561|&NodeID=5588>

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ “Summer Dreamers Academy Preliminary Evaluation Results and Next Steps.” Office of Student Support Services – Pittsburgh Public Schools. March 8, 2011.

http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/14311059122535553/lib/14311059122535553/Education%20Committee/2011/March8/SDAPresEdCommitteeMarch2011_Final.pdf

³⁶ “IPS Summer Fun Guide.” Indianapolis Public Schools, p. 2.

http://www.about.ips.k12.in.us/fileadmin/Assets/AboutUs/pdf/englishfinal_approval.pdf

³⁷ “Indianapolis Summer Advantage Scholars Get a “Mayor” Thrill.” Summer Advantage USA, July 17, 2009.

http://www.summeradvantage.org/news/Mayor_Ballard_Visits_Summer_Advantage_Scholars.pdf

districts, and the prevention of summer learning loss among vulnerable student populations is a specifically-cited goal.

The Summer Advantage USA website provides additional descriptions of the “core elements” of its programs, many of which align well with our previous discussion of the literature on mitigating or reversing summer learning loss. According to the website, Summer Advantage programs typically span five weeks, with instruction and activities provided 6.5 hours a day, five days a week. In addition to certified teachers leading the classes, college students act as teaching assistants, helping the program maintain a ratio of two staff members to 24 students per class. Featuring another element that was presented as a good practice in the literature, the program seeks to involve parents, inviting them to participate in the program’s field trips, meet with teachers, and attend workshops. Finally, in order to continually evaluate the effects of the programming, Summer Advantage administers pre-and post-tests using standardized assessments.³⁸

Jackson Public Schools

Jackson Public Schools has implemented both a public reading campaign (“One Jackson, Many Readers”) and a full-day, eight-week “Extended Learning Solutions Summer Adventure Club” for students ages 4-12.³⁹ The latter is provided through an outside organization in partnership with Jackson Public Schools. Self-contained weekly themes allow for students to register for particular weeks, and the program provides math and language enrichment, music and athletic activities, and more.⁴⁰ The “One Jackson, Many Readers” campaign exists both “[to create] a city-wide culture of reading that includes students and adults [and to bring] students back to school in August with academic gains instead of loss.”⁴¹ The program, which is run entirely outside the classroom during the summer, includes a required reading title for each grade level (K-12th), with distinct titles for students in advanced courses. Students must read at least two additional books and complete pre-formatted Reader Response Logs for them.⁴² In the first two weeks of the academic year, students additionally complete a project relating to one of the books read over the summer. Finally, incentives are provided for reading more than the minimum required number of books.⁴³

³⁸ “Overview.” Summer Advantage USA. <http://www.summeradvantage.org/programs.html>

³⁹ “Schools – Summer Programs.” Jackson Public Schools.
<http://www.jackson.k12.ms.us/content.aspx?url=/page/summerprograms>

⁴⁰ “Summer Programs.” Jackson Public Schools.
http://www.jackson.k12.ms.us/schools/summer_programs/els_info.pdf

⁴¹ “Summer Reading List 2011.” Jackson Public Schools.
<http://www.jackson.k12.ms.us/content.aspx?url=/page/summerreadingprogram>

⁴² The logs are available as part of this file: “Jackson Public School District Summer Reading Guidelines 2011.” Jackson Public Schools.
http://www.jackson.k12.ms.us/schools/summer_reading/summer_reading_guidelines.pdf

⁴³ Other public, non-classroom-based reading campaigns were noted in assembling this report, but they were not distinct enough to merit inclusion. Such programs were the only examples found of completely outside-the-classroom summer learning programs run by school systems.

Dallas Independent School District

The “Thriving Minds Summer Camp” was introduced in 2010 as a “citywide initiative that brings together organizations that believe in the power of imagination, creativity and innovation to change the way children learn.”⁴⁴ Additionally, the elimination of summer learning loss is a stated goal of the program.⁴⁵ While the students were hosted at schools, they received instruction both from District teachers and from community arts professionals, the latter using their expertise to “[lead] intensive studio instruction in specific arts disciplines and [to provide] dedicated work time to complete in-class projects.”⁴⁶

This four-week, all-day program for 4th and 5th grade students was offered chiefly in partnership with the organization Big Thought, who helped to coordinate 43 community organizations that contributed staff, supplies, and facilities for the program.⁴⁷ Attending students were noted to be 97 percent “economic need.” Additionally, participating students performed better than peer non-participants when they began their next school year, suggesting that learning loss was eliminated, possibly in favor of learning gain in key subjects.⁴⁸ The latter possibility, however, cannot actually be confirmed given the information available.

Chicago Public Schools

The Chicago Public Schools “Keep Kids Learning” program “provides 3rd-7th (rising 4th-8th) grade students the opportunity for academic, recreation and social enrichment.”⁴⁹ The full-day program has grown from an initial 10 schools in 2006 to more than 40 in 2011. Academic instruction is intermixed with enrichment activities with the aims of “[changing] student attitudes about summer learning and learning in general, [achieving] summer learning gains, [and preparing] students academically and emotionally for the school year.” The Keep Kids Learning program incorporates a distinctive curriculum provided by Classroom, Inc., where students learn through activities simulating various business operations and careers, such as banking, news writing, and law.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ “Thriving Minds Summer Camp 2010.” *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ “Keep Kids Learning.” Chicago Public Schools.

http://www.cps.edu/Programs/Before_and_after_school/Pages/KeepKidsLearning.aspx

Another article suggests that students up to 12th grade may enroll, which would make this the broadest program of its kind observed. See “Mayor Daley, CPS Officials Announce New Online Summer School Project.” Chicago Public Schools, June 10, 2010.

http://www.cps.edu/News/Press_releases/Pages/06_10_2010_PR1.aspx

⁵⁰ “Mayor Daley, School Leaders Kick Off Summer School with Range of New Programs.” Chicago Public Schools, June 16, 2008. http://www.cps.edu/News/Press_releases/Pages/06_16_2008_PR1.aspx See also “Classroom, Inc. Ramps Up in Chicago.” Classroom, Inc. <http://www.classroominc.org/node/265>

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