

Successful Summers: The Role of High-Quality Summer Learning in High School Completion

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Solutions
to the Dropout Crisis

National Summer Learning Association

Our vision is to ensure that every child is safe, healthy and engaged in learning during the summer months.

Our mission is to connect and equip schools and community organizations to deliver quality summer learning programs to our nation's youth to help close the achievement gap.



Key Discussion Points

1. Overview of research on summer learning
2. Intersections between summer learning and high school success
3. Quality features and results from high-performing summer learning programs
4. Challenges and policy recommendations for a New Vision for Summer



Why Summer Learning?

- Compelling research base
- Laboratory for innovation in teaching & learning
- Support for working families
- Spans key transition periods
- Significant reform priority for the current Administration



Summer Learning & the Achievement Gap

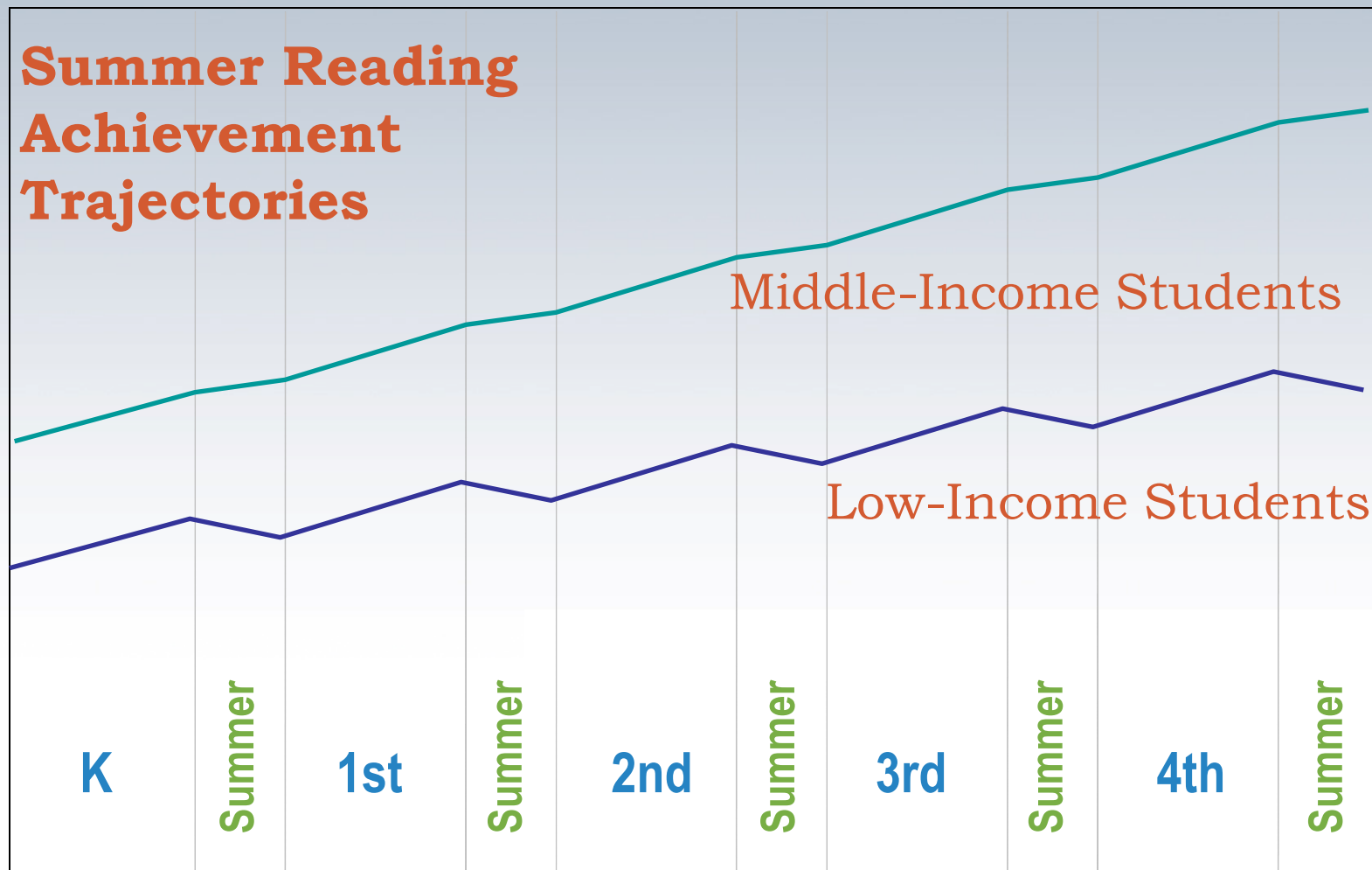
- Since 1906, numerous studies have confirmed that children experience learning losses in math and reading without continued opportunities for skill building over the summer (White, Heyns, Cooper, Alexander)
- 2/3 of the ninth grade achievement gap in reading can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007)
- Summer learning losses have later life consequences, including high school curriculum placement, high school dropout, and college attendance



Summer Learning & the Achievement Gap

Average Reading Achievement Level

Summer Reading Achievement Trajectories



Summer Risks for Younger Youth: Health & Nutrition, Technology Usage

- Children gain BMI nearly twice as fast during the summer as during the school year (von Hippel, Powell, Downey, & Rowland, 2007)
- In 2009, only 1 in 6 children who received free and reduced lunch during the school year accessed Summer Nutrition (FRAC, *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*, 2009)
- Children in lower-income areas chose easier books and spent less time with books; used computers for entertainment rather than educational activities; spent much less time with an adult mentor (Neumann & Celano, 2008)



Significant Alignment in Findings

Summer Experiences

- By the end of fifth grade, lower-SES youth are nearly 3 years behind their higher-SES peers in reading.
- Opportunity during at least 2 out of 3 consecutive summers can increase impact on achievement.
- Differences in summer learning experiences during the elementary school years account for 2/3 of the ninth grade achievement gap.
- Differential summer learning experiences have later life consequences, including whether kids graduate and go on to college.

Early Warning Indicators

- Kids falling off track in the sixth grade tend to have only 1 or 2 off-track indicators: 1) failing either English or Math; 2) having either attendance or behavior issues.
- 2 out of 3 years of being in a classroom where accelerated learning was the norm increased the likelihood of closing achievement gap.
- The earlier students develop off-track indicators, the lower their graduation odds appear to be.

Alexander, Borman, Balfanz



Common Indicators of Success

- Regular attendance & participation
- High engagement
- Motivation to learn / effort
- Confidence/ belief in ability to learn
- On-time promotion and credit attainment
- Ability to manage time and behavior
- Adequate grades in core courses, particularly reading and math
- Developmentally- / grade-appropriate skills and knowledge
- Parental involvement in learning
- Strong relationships with teachers and “connected” adults
- Supportive peer culture



Features of High Quality Summer Programs

From the Association's Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs:

- **Structure**
 - 1:8 staff to youth ratio
 - 80% retention from one summer to the next
 - 150 hours of programming per summer
 - Frequent formative and summative assessment
 - Strong partner collaboration, including data sharing
- **Focus on learning**
 - Focus on skill-building to support in-school success
 - New, interesting experiences
 - Forward thinking, rather than remedial only
 - Highly skilled and well-trained staff
- **Youth-centered**
 - Youth input and engagement
 - Program spirit, motto, ideals (culture)
 - Family engagement



Successful Programs In Action

- Furman University's Bridges to a Brighter Future
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Ninth Grade Nation
- Aim High
- Minneapolis Public Schools Camp 2014
- Higher Achievement
- Philadelphia Public Schools S.L.A.M.
- Montana Migrant Education
- Project Morry



Key Considerations from the Research

- ✓ Getting dosage & delivery right!
- ✓ Longitudinal tracking of impact
- ✓ Appropriate measures of success
- ✓ Effective use of partnerships
- ✓ Funding to achieve scale
- ✓ Knowledge of summer loss patterns for older youth



NSLA Policy Agenda

- Increase public investment in high-quality summer learning programs
 - National Campaign for Summer Learning
- Make summer programs an essential component and strategy of education reform



Policy Landscape

- Good News, Bad News
 - Many districts and states cutting or eliminating summer program due to budget cuts
 - Several districts and states investing new funds in innovative programs
 - Current window of opportunity



Federal Policy

- No funds that exclusively target summer
- Several funding streams CAN be used for summer:
 - Title I and Title I school improvement
 - Race to the Top and Innovation
 - 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 - Workforce Investment Act, AmeriCorps



Policy Opportunities

- ESEA Reauthorization
- Race to the Top and Innovation
 - School turnaround/improvement
- STEM education
- Summer transition programs
- Proficiency-based learning
- All innovative reform strategies



State Policy

- 35 states have summer learning policies
- Most include summer programs as an ALLOWABLE use
- As a result, most states do not know how much funding goes to summer
- Innovative examples in Kentucky, Wyoming



Local Policy

- Wide variation
- Mainly a limited, remedial vision
- Several bright spots
 - Pittsburgh
 - Cincinnati
 - Baltimore
 - Chicago
 - Philadelphia



New Vision for Summer School

- Increase the duration and intensity
- Expand participation
- Change the focus from narrow remediation and test preparation to a blended approach of both academic learning in core subject areas AND enrichment activities
- Strengthen and expand partnerships



New Vision for Summer School

- Provide incentives to students that improve attendance and engagement by making enrichment activities an essential component
- Provide innovative professional development
- Include innovative approaches to learning for older students
- Lastly, summers need to move from the periphery to the center of school reform strategies through sustainable and stable funding, better planning, infrastructure, data collection, and accountability.



Challenges and Opportunities

- Challenges
 - Budget
 - Vision
- Opportunities
 - Low-performing schools
 - ESEA reauthorization
 - High school reform
 - STEM education
 - Child Nutrition and Obesity



Conclusions

- Summer as a time for innovation
- Window of opportunity
- Leadership is needed





Summer

Changes Everything™

2010 National Conference on Summer Learning

November 9–10, 2010

Optional trainings November 8

Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

summerlearning.org/conference



Contact Information

Please use the Association as a resource!

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