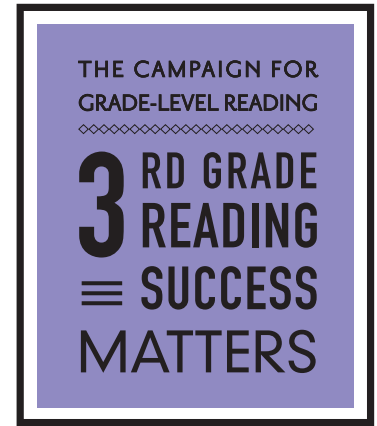


SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

Working Paper



The Data

- **Reading losses more pronounced for low-income students:** Low-income students lose an average of more than two months in reading achievement in the summer, while their middle-income peers tend to make gains in reading.
- **The cumulative effect takes a toll:** By the end of fifth grade, disadvantaged children are nearly three grade equivalents behind their more affluent peers in reading.
- **Health and nutrition setbacks:** Children gain weight two to three times faster during the summer months, a trend that is more pronounced for African-American and Hispanic kids, and for those who are already overweight.
- **Closing the achievement gap:** Several randomized, longitudinal studies of summer learning programs have found that students make statistically significant gains in reading performance. Considerable evidence suggests that targeting programs to low-income students in the summer can dramatically accelerate achievement and help close gaps in reading performance.
- **Reading books during summer vacation can improve students' reading proficiency:** A Harvard Center for Evaluation study found that reading four or five books over the summer months had an impact on fall reading achievement comparable to attending summer school.

The Issues

Hampering third grade reading proficiency: Lost time in the summer slows students' progress toward third grade reading proficiency. The cumulative toll exacerbates the achievement gap and even influences whether students graduate from high school and go on to college.

Little access to enriching summer programs: Poor and minority kids are overrepresented in remedial summer school, but often have no access to enriching summer programs that have been shown to encourage literacy gains.

Cost of re-teaching material: Re-teaching forgotten material when students return from the summer break costs schools more than \$1,500 per child, or more than \$18,000 during their K-12 education, according to some estimates.

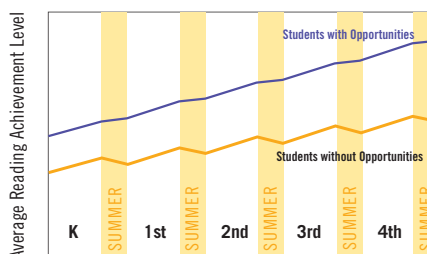
Options for Communities

- **Encourage collaborative efforts between schools and community-based organizations** to offer programs that incorporate literacy skills into enriching summer activities. An innovative approach is Horizons National, which uses private school campuses and philanthropic support to provide free programs for low-income students in 20 sites nationally.
- **Promote library summer reading programs that improve reading skills:** Three-quarters of Pennsylvania's public librarians said their book circulation increases between 6 and 10 percent during the summer, bringing improved reading skills, increased cultural awareness and academic interest, and greater comfort and familiarity with libraries. Cities can also promote contests for the children who read the most books.
- **Bring partners together for summer programs that address the nutritional needs of low-income children:** Maryland's Summer Nutrition Program leverages federal funding to help schools and nonprofits fill the "summer hunger gap" experienced by students who typically rely on school for breakfast and lunch. The program also helps combat childhood obesity and offers enriching learning opportunities.
- **Advocate for state and federal policy improvements:** Advocate for policies that expand families' access to high-quality summer learning programs, increase the use of federal funds for programs, and include summer as an integral piece of a child's education. Cincinnati used federal stimulus money in 2010 to offer a month-long program, dubbed the "Fifth Quarter."

Resources

- **National Summer Learning Association** (www.summerlearning.org)
- **Summer Advantage USA** (www.summeradvantage.org)
- **Reading Rockets** (www.readingrockets.org/calendar/summer)
- **Let's Read, Let's Move** (www.serve.gov/lrlm.asp)

Summer of Reading Achievement Trajectories



Source: Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). "The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review." *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227–268.

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