Making Summer Count and Wallace’s Summer Learning Demonstration

Heather Schwartz
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Substantial Achievement Gaps Exist Between Low- and Higher-Income Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4th Grade</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher income</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent

- Below basic
- At or above basic
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 by 9th grade
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 program programs all found to have positive effects

• Studies have found effects of summer learning programs endure for 2 years after the student has engaged in a summer program

  No studies estimate benefits beyond 2 years

• Not all summer learning programs studied produced achievement gains
Summer School Comes in Many Shapes and Sizes

- School district led ↔ Externally-led
- Mandatory ↔ Voluntary
- Classroom-based ↔ Home-based
- Academic only ↔ Enrichment activities
- Remedial ↔ Opportunity gap
Program Quality, Enrollment, and Attendance Are Critical to Achieving Benefits

- Students must attend to reap benefits
- Certain program characteristics are linked to student achievement gains
  - Smaller class sizes & individualized attention
  - Involving parents
- Expert opinion points to best program practice
  - High-quality instructors
  - Aligning the school year and summer curricula
  - Including content beyond remediation
General 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
General Recommendations for Policymakers and Funders

• Extend the research base
  RCTs of voluntary programs

  Track cumulative and long-term academic and non-academic outcomes

• Clarify how different funds can be used to support summer programs

• Support consistent funding sources for summer programs
Wallace Foundation’s *More Time for Learning* Initiative

Strengthen program readiness

- **Summer 2011**
- **Summer 2012**
- **Summer 2013**
- **Summer 2014**
- **2015**
- **2016**

Evaluate results

- **3rd Grade**
- **4th Grade**
- **5th Grade**
- **6th Grade**

Assessment of strengths and weaknesses

Continue tracking kids

The interim findings reported here have not been formally reviewed and should not be cited without authors' permission.
## Program Approach Varies Across 6 Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Eligible students</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>Students in 13 elementary schools</td>
<td>Academic and socio-emotional; develop partnerships between schools and CBOs</td>
<td>Intermediary and district partnership</td>
<td>4-6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>Students in 16 Turnaround school</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duval</td>
<td>Students in 21 Turnaround schools</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>Academic, remedial, enrichment</td>
<td>Intermediary and district partnership</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>Academic and enrichment</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>4.5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>Students scoring at or below basic</td>
<td>Academic and enrichment</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Key Program Strengths Across Districts

- Multiple stakeholders buy-in to the importance of the programs
- Dedicated, supportive, hard-working teachers and administrators
- Very high rates of parent and student satisfaction
- Continuous improvement mindsets

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Challenges Identified Across Program Components

- Insufficient management
- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities among district and site-leaders
- Late recruitment of students and teachers
- Poor teacher training
- Weak math and ELA curricula
- Low student participation in some districts
- Student misbehavior

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High-Leverage Recommendations

• Conduct early and ongoing planning (i.e., 6 months in advance)
• Increase time for academic instruction
• Improve the rigor of math and ELA curriculum
• Ensure teachers practice curriculum during training
• Improve attendance rates

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Questions

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Summer 2011 Formative Evaluation Guided by Research-Based Conceptual Framework

Evaluation focused on rising fourth graders
Barriers to Implementing Recommendations

• Resources
  Time
  Funding
  Dedicated personnel

• Lack of easy solutions
  How to increase attendance?
  How to improve curriculum?