



EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8

Focus on Summer Learning

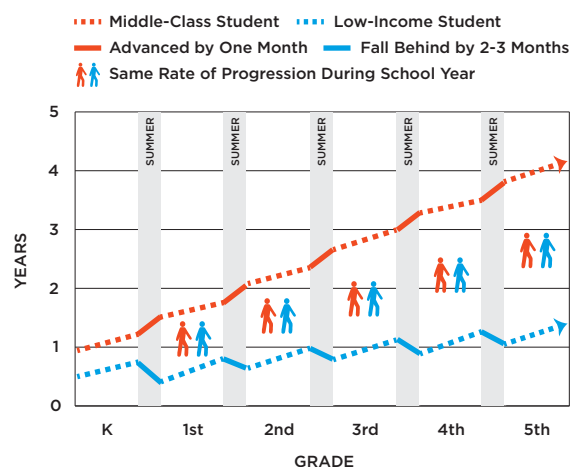
More than 100 years of research shows that children lose skills in both math and reading over the summer when they are not regularly practicing these skills in school. This phenomenon is known as **“summer learning loss”** or **“the summer slide.”**^{1,2}

Summer learning loss affects low-income students more than higher-income students, who often make academic gains during the summer through exposure to a wide variety of enriching activities and experiences that are often not available or accessible to lower-income families. Most children lose about two months of grade-level math skills over the summer months. Children from low-income families also lose more than two months in reading achievement, while their middle-class peers make slight gains.^{3,4,5}

Summer Learning Loss Contributes to Achievement Gaps

- During the school year, students, regardless of income, acquire reading skills at the same rate, though they do not start off in the same place due to differences in school readiness.^{6,7}
- Low-income students lose an average of two months of reading skills over the summer. Over time, this summer learning loss can add up to the equivalent of three years of reading loss by the end of fifth grade, widening the achievement gap that was already present between low-income and higher-income students when they entered kindergarten.^{8,9,10}
- More than half of the achievement gap in reading and language skills between low-income and higher-income high school students can be attributed to summer learning loss that occurs in elementary school.^{11,12}

THE EFFECT OF SUMMER LEARNING LOSS ON READING SKILLS, GRADES K-5



Source: Cooper, H., Borman, G., & Fairchild, R. (2010). School calendars and academic achievement. In J. Meece & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling, and Human Development* (pp. 342-355). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Access to Summer Learning Programs

- In the United States, only 25% to 36% of children between the ages of six and eleven attend summer learning programs, and those who have the most to gain (i.e., low-income children) are less likely to participate in summer learning programs other than traditional summer school.^{13,14}
- A 2014 survey found that 21% of Rhode Island parents had a child participating in a summer learning program and that 38% of Rhode Island children would participate in a summer learning program if it was readily available.¹⁵

Reach and Effectiveness of Summer Learning Programs

- Rigorous research studies have found that voluntary summer programs, mandatory summer programs, and programs that encourage children to read over the summer can all have positive effects on student achievement; effects are greatest when children attend regularly and programming is high quality and individualized to meet students' needs.^{16,17}
- The federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative provides funding for after-school and summer enrichment programs that serve students in high-poverty, low-performing schools.¹⁸ During the summer of 2013, almost 3,700 Rhode Island children entering grades Pre-K through 12 participated in 21st CCLC summer programs.¹⁹ Children who participated in Rhode Island's 21st CCLC programs had fewer unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents, and children who participated for 30 days or more had improved reading skills.²⁰
- In 2012, the Rhode Island General Assembly approved the inclusion of \$250,000 in new funding for innovative summer learning partnerships as part of the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative, a public-private partnership among Hasbro, the Rhode Island General Assembly, and United Way of Rhode Island.²¹ During the summer of 2014, over 1,600 Rhode Island children in kindergarten through grade 12 participated in Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative (HSLI) programs. Students who participated in Rhode Island's HSLI programs during the summer of 2014 had average gains from pre-test to post-test of 35% in literacy and 47% in math.²²

Recommendations

- Create a permanent, sustainable, and stable funding stream for summer learning programs from a combination of state and federal funding, Title I, and other sources.
- Develop and expand summer learning programs for preschool- and elementary-age children that are research based, full-day, aligned with school curricula, taught by trained school-day and community-based educators, have small class sizes, offer group learning with individualized supports, and use fun and engaging hands-on activities to teach concepts that are grounded in a real-world context.
- Target students in key transition periods, such as the summer before kindergarten, to ensure that students are prepared for success in new environments.

References

^{1,3,12} *Summer learning: Moving from the periphery to the core.* (2009). *The Progress of Education Reform*, 10(3), Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

^{2,4} 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*, 3, 227-268.

^{5,6,10,15} *Early warning! Why reading by the end of third grade matters: A KIDS COUNT special report.* (2010). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

^{7,8,11} Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R. & Olson, L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

^{9,16} McCombs, J. S. et al. (2011). *Making summer count: How summer programs can boost children's learning.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

^{14,17} Terzian, M. & Moore, K. A. (2009). *What works for summer learning programs for low-income children and youth: Preliminary lessons from experimental evaluations of social interventions.* Washington, DC: Child Trends.

¹⁵ Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *Rhode Island: Summer learning programs.* Retrieved June 30, 2015, from www.afterschoolalliance.org

¹⁸ Afterschool Alliance. (2015). *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing afterschool and summer learning support to communities nationwide.* Retrieved June 25, 2015, from www.afterschoolalliance.org

¹⁹ Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports, Summer 2013.

²⁰ Vinson, M., Marchand, J., Sparr, M. & Moroney, D. (2013). *Rhode Island's 21st Century Community Learning Center program evaluation: Evaluation report 2011-12.* Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research.

²¹ National Summer Learning Association. (n.d.). *Moving summer learning forward: A strategic roadmap for funding in tough times.* Retrieved June 25, 2015, from www.summerlearning.org

²² Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance. (n.d.). *Rethink summer: The Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative.* Retrieved June 24, 2015, from www.afterschoolri.org



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Phone: 401-351-9400
rikids@rikidscount.org
www.rikidscount.org



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