

Summer Learning Program's Impact on Summer Slide

Tasia Smith

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Professor Heather Schilling
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Abstract

Summer Learning Program's Impact on Summer Slide is about just that, summer learning programs. The paper explains how summer learning programs differ from summer school. Summer learning programs not only give the student a chance to enhance their skills, but also the teacher. The main points touched upon in the paper are the cost of these programs, the availability and how these programs really are able to help the students to learn. The sub points of summer learning programs are how effective programs are run and how low economic and high economic status effects the situation.

Why are many schools switching to year round school? This question persists in a lot of students', parents' and educators' minds. More schools choose this route because of the gap in knowledge students lose during the summer. Of course this route may not be the only choice; just like this is not the only route that schools are taking. The scenario of a normal school aged child: the last bell rings before summer vacation, the children walk in a not-so-straight not-so-calm line to their bus, have the noisiest bus ride home of the year, and do not think about school again until it is time to get their supplies for the following school year. This scenario continually changes each year. The constant push of standardized tests, and No Child Left Behind, makes the summer months much more important in a student's education. What educators and researchers know as the "summer slide" refers to the knowledge students lose over the summer. The summer slide could potentially decrease student's tests scores greatly. This potential problem and the push from standardized tests and NCLB to raise test scores influenced school to take action. The alternate route consists of conducting summer learning programs.

These programs differ from summer school in that most students in summer school are required to be there by their school. Summer learning programs could be a variety of academic endeavors. Programs broaden a student's interest in a subject not heavily studied, such as music or art. Struggling students in school may seek help in these programs, but still the program can not be required. One major program, called the National Center for Summer Learning, dedicates their time, money and efforts to ensuring that every student is provided with the essentials to ensure him or her the tools necessary to achieve a successful life. One of this center's mottos is **"to build a better world we have to replace the patchwork of lucky breaks and arbitrary advantages that today determine success...with a society that provides opportunity for all."** This motto puts a positive outlook on summer learning programs, but with any advantages come

disadvantages. The three main concerns or issues of summer learning programs are cost, how these programs help students and the availability of these programs. Each one of these concerns or issues effect what students and how many students are able to participate in summer learning programs.

The first concern of summer learning programs is the price in which it costs to enroll in these programs. The price mainly depends on the school or district that is paying for the program. Many people associate the quote “the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer” with scenarios such as this. People say this because some programs are too expensive for everyone to afford. This means that the wealthy children, who are most commonly the children who do not need summer learning programs, are the only children whose families are able to afford the program. Studies have shown that income of a student’s parent or parents affect their learning. The more access to knowledge a student has, the more it affects their fluency and vocabulary awareness. According to Celano and Neuman 2006, for low income children’s one line of print, higher-income students read three lines. Another shocking fact found in the same study stated that for in middle-class neighborhoods there are twelve books per child, and in low-economic neighborhoods one book was available per three hundred and fifty five children! (Celano, 2006, 258) The issue of socioeconomic class will continue to play a role in what level of education students are able to receive. Even though not everyone can afford to send their child to a summer learning program or out of school program, there are different payment options.

There are different options for the price of these programs. Programs receive funding in a variety of ways: through the grants, whether government or foundation, private donations and fundraising events. Among these programs, there are also the programs that force the parents to pay full price for these services. In order to make a conscious effort to make learning available

for all students, programs and foundations have been started to aid low-income families. Some of these programs have federal based aid, so depending on the parent or parent's income they would pay a certain amount. There is a certain program called Upward Bound TRIO Program (Collegeboard, 2009). This program helps students that are from a low income family, First Generation College bound students or students with disabilities. Though this specific aid program is for high school students, there are other programs that are designed to help younger students, too. Not only do these programs help students throughout school, but the programs have potential to help a student get into a college or university. Another type of program, though not many programs are based on this, but run strictly on donations. While researching different programs many of the programs website had a direct link to be able to donate money to a certain program or foundation. The economic situation in this country continues to make payment options more important. Donations help programs to thrive and stay open. Many summer learning programs have had to close or decrease parts of their program due to funding. According to an article, one elementary school has to cut its pay for their summer learning program by twenty-five percent (Everett, 2009). This has the potential to hurt what and how the students will learn in these programs. This leads into the second issue of summer learning programs.

The second issue of summer learning programs is how they are able to help students. First, a program must know how to run to effectively run their program. According to John Hopkins University 2006, nine steps make these programs effective. These researchers divided the nine steps into two different categories. The first division addresses the program's approach to learning. Step one focuses on the intentional acceleration on learning. The program must want the kids to progress forward, not stand still in their knowledge. A strong commitment to

develop the youth would be addressed in the second goal of the approach to learning. The commitment of the program must be strong and pure in motives. The program runs for a reason, for the benefit of the children and the teachers, this must be remembered. The final goal of the first division must be a proactive approach to summer learning. All of these goals steer towards the full, holistic, development of the children in these programs.

The second division of the program contains six different steps. Following are six characteristics the program must not lack in order to strive for the benefit of the student. Characteristic one involves the leaders of the programs showing strong and empowering leadership skills. Planning of day to day lessons and activities must be ahead of time and collaborative, according to the second characteristic. These characteristics should be applied to regular schools, as well as summer learning programs. The third characteristic stresses the importance of opportunities for their staff to enhance their skills and broaden their knowledge base. It not only stresses the importance of these opportunities, but also the importance of having many opportunities! Each summer learning program should building strong, lasting, strategic partnerships. These partnerships range from community ties all the way to the other side of the spectrum which is personal ties. The last two characteristics stress the importance of being life-long characteristics, much like the others do, too. Commitment to improvement of the program and evaluation of the program needs to constantly be implemented, lists characteristic five. Commitment to those two steps will ensure that the program stays current with the time, and performs at the best possible performance. The last characteristic focuses on the cost and sustainability of the program. All nine of these characteristics develop the summer learning programs into a holistic, enhancing and supportive environment (Bell, 2007).

Searching through different summer learning programs a site for a learning center came up. This learning center is called Kids Kollege 21st Century Community Learning Center. This center is for summer learning and enrichment. On their website they model their curriculum and their program's goals. Their program strives on accelerating children. For instance, their kindergarten and first grade curriculum focuses on sentence structure, word structure and graphic organizers. During the science portion of their class their students, also known as young scientists, explore through experiments. New and upcoming programs do have existing programs they could use as a model.

The most important way that summer learning programs help is by decreasing the amount of knowledge the student loses over summer vacation. One study done by the After School Alliance and the National Center for Summer Learning stated the statistics for the knowledge loss the student experiences. In math students lose two months of grade level equivalency, and in low income families the students lose two months of achievement. While these students are losing information the students in the summer learning programs are gaining knowledge. Summer learning programs do not only teach mathematics, language arts and writing they teach many skills the students will need throughout life. For instance, the summer learning programs may have the kids involved in service learning projects. This would help the students to gain experiences, build friendships and make real life connections. The last way the summer learning programs help the students is by helping them to gain self esteem and confidence. If a student is struggling in a certain subject during the school year, summer is a great time to strengthen those skills. For instance, if a student is not at the accurate reading level then the student is very unlikely to read in front of the class to build these skills. In the summer learning programs he or she may be able to receive more individualized instruction to strengthen

this skill. The only students that will gain the most from summer learning programs are the students that have access to these programs.

The third concern of summer learning programs is the availability of these programs, and of those programs what is their quality. This concern raises a lot of questions. One survey done by the (Alexander, 2007) showed that when the top one hundred school districts were asked if their corporations had summer learning programs only fifty-nine had programs. Do only the higher-income families have access to these programs? Is every school associated with one of these programs? Who teaches in these programs? Since not every school has a summer learning program, as previously mentioned in the first issue, the programs tend to be too expensive for some families that do not receive aid from any organizations. This decreases the amount of students, but the location of the programs tends to decrease the availability, too. If a program is across town from a family, especially in a bigger city such as Indianapolis or Detroit, transportation would also be an issue students may face. An issue that has been covered in a great amount by the news is funding for these programs. Since the economy has so many problems many learning programs have not been able to stay open for business. If this has not affected a lot of programs already, it will affect many more in the summer of 2009. The programs that have been able to stay open are likely to increase the price per student. There are many steps that low-income families can take to get their children involved in these programs. One of the steps is very obtainable for most families. The parents can visit the public school that their child attends and ask if they know of any local programs, and also see if the school knows of any organizations that would aid the financial needs of that family.

Since not every city has summer learning programs, there are many steps that families of both incomes can take to ensure their student's success. First, the primary care giver can

supervise the student's activities over the summer. The student does not have to constantly be doing homework, but the student needs to be engaged in enriching activities. These may range anywhere from art activities to music to visiting a museum if possible. No matter what activities the student is participating in, there does need to be supervision. Celano and Neuman's article made another astounding fact; this fact comes from low-economic and high-economic families. When students from different classes were observed in the library they used the technology and resources very different. So not only do low-economic students have less access to the information, but they also use the access poorly. The caregivers could teach their child how to effectively use the technology and information given to them. The more access to books, information and facts that intrigue the student, the more likely it becomes that he or she will want to learn more about a topic. The possibilities are endless for extending knowledge during summer.

Second, if a parent has to find alternate care for the summer, they can find care that has education attached with it. For instance, there are day cares that offer educational opportunities along with them. This could be on a large or small scale. Depending on the students and the budget of the family, a group setting may be effective or a one on one setting may be more effective. This decision needs to be made by the care giver.

Lastly, a group of friends or the people in a neighborhood could start a small education group. Books and access to technology can be less than cost effective. If a small group was formed many different things could take place. A parent who may not have time every night to spend teaching his or her child would be able to spend one night teaching five or six children. Second, each parent or caregiver may have a different area of expertise to add to the group. For instance, if one parent is not strong in math then he or she would be able to help the children

with language arts and writing. Third, the group would be able to stock pile their selection of books. This would increase the availability of books for the children. Whether these children are high income or low income they will be exposed to a different selection of vocabulary, because this will be a different set of books besides their own. This will help increase their word recognition, fluency and ultimately in the end it will increase their comprehension.

What does this mean for teachers? This means opportunity. For instance, a school district may be in need of a summer learning program, this would be a great opportunity for an ambitious teacher. Teachers could contact their school officials about the need of a summer learning program. Helping to start the program would hopefully ensure that teacher of a sport at the program. Opening a summer learning program would also help teachers to make extra money. The second of two important things in a teacher's mind beside money, test scores. Summer slide affects tests scores, which controls teachers' jobs. Eliminating summer slide would decrease the work for teachers during the school year. Summer learning programs offer students opportunity to extend their learning, but also offer teachers to enhance their teaching. Environment of the summer program runs different than a normal classroom. This gives the teacher room to experiment with lesson plans or books that he or she could not fit into the regularly scheduled classroom. Each person involved with the summer learning programs should be striving towards making the program a safe, mind enhancing environment for the child.

Summer learning programs are in existence because they are beneficial for the students that are able to access them. Also, they help benefit or have the potential to benefit teachers from all different types of schools. How does this help the students that are not able to access them? It does not help them. Studies and statistics prove that these programs are helping, so the reoccurring question is: where are all of the summer learning programs, and why are they not

more cost effective? The three main concerns and issues of summer learning programs are the cost, how they are able to help the students and the availability of these programs. These concerns interconnect themselves. Without money, a program would be unable to hire qualified teachers, and supply them with the appropriate supplies. In order for these programs to efficiently teach students there has to be efficient teachers and available programs. Summer learning programs links parents, educators, organizations and students together to eliminate the summer slide and raise test scores.

References

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Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D.R., Olson, L.S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*. 168-178. Retrieved February 24, 2009, from, <http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/April07ASRfeature.pdf>

This article was done by three researchers at John Hopkins University. It talks about the effect that socio economic class has on summer slide. It also talks about the availability of these summer learning programs.

Bell, S.R., Carrillo N. (2007). Characteristics of effective summer learning programs in practice. *Interscience*, 114.

This article is written by two researchers from John Hopkins University. It talks about the nine characteristics that are important for a summer learning program. It divides these characteristics into two different divisions. These divisions are the programs approach to learning and the infrastructure and organization of the program.

Celano, D., Neuman, S.B. (2008). When school is closed, the knowledge gap grows.. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90, Retrieved February 24, 2009, from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=35555826&site=ehost-live>

This article summarizes the gap that builds between children during the summer months. The article takes a negative stand point on summer learning because it states that it puts children of a low socioeconomic status at a huge disadvantage. The article has two main points to it: the gap acquired by summer learning and then this information is broken into socioeconomic status (SES). Information is provided in this article about the differences of materials that certain students pick over other students, and how that affects those students.

Collegeboard (2009). Summer learning programs. *Collegeboard*, Retrieved February 24, 2009, from <http://www.collegeboard.com/parents/plan/hs-steps/21284.html>

Collegeboard is a site for college preparation. For this paper suggestions for summer learning tips and programs availability were taken from their website. This website explains how summer learning programs can be used for all ages. Also, it explains how summer learning programs may vary in time length depending on the program.

Everett, N. (2009, August 6). Summer school pay cut 25 percent. *Morgan Hill Times*, Retrieved March 5th, 2009, from <http://www.morganhilltimes.com/news/255082-summer-school-pay-cut-25-percent>

This is a newspaper article. This newspaper article talks about the pay cut that teachers are receiving for summer school. They are receiving only 75% of their normal pay for the work that they were originally getting full pay for.

Kids Kollege University. (2009). Summer Academy. *Kids Kollege*. Retrived May 1, 2009, from <http://www.kidskollegeuniversity.com/edit/assets/2009%20Kids%20Kollege%20Summer%20Schedule1.pdf>

This website sets an example for summer learning programs. They have laid out their summer curriculum by grades. They accelerate their student's learning so they are able to strive the following year.

See more ideas about Summer, Learning and Summer slide. Learning loss during summer vacation is far worse for students of lower socioeconomic status, making low-cost and free educational summer programming essential. New York City public schools begin summer break today. For many students, summer is a time to rest, travel and play, and a recent study even demonstrates the critical role of play in... 3 Ways to Infuse Global Learning Into Summer Programs. Asia Society, Student Engagement, Programming, Summer Programs, Dolores Park, Education, Learning, Students, Travel. Campaign Learning Children Summer Kids Summer Time Studying Big Kids Teaching. Scaling Child Centered Advocacy Campaigns. The Summer Learning Resource Guide offers resources and considerations based on what has been implemented in the shift to remote learning and the research behind summer learning. District teams may use these resources in planning and implementing summer learning programs for in-person or a blended format as well. It is well-documented that students often begin the academic year at achievement levels lower than when they left school the prior year, a gap known as the "summer slide." Current projections show that there will be even greater gaps in student achievement due to the closure of school