



The Principals' Partnership

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Research Brief

Summer School

Question: What are the components of a successful summer school program?

Summary of Findings:

The purposes for summer school are as varied as are their structures. In a compilation of research conducted on summer school programs, it was found that many summer programs appeared to be primarily aimed at remediation, not to solidify knowledge acquired during the previous school year. A theme that appeared to run throughout the literature was that the current system of a three month summer break was vastly outdated and highly contributed to the condition of "summer learning loss," which in turn, added to the widening of the achievement gap. The literature suggested that students on the secondary level might take summer classes to:

- increase their grade point average.
- take additional electives during the school year.
- repeat a course they did not pass.
- be better prepared for their courses in the next school year.

In research done by the University of Missouri and Johns Hopkins, it was found that:

- students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tended to lose more academic ground, especially in reading and math, during the long summer break than those who came from a middle socioeconomic background.
- regardless of the socioeconomic level of the students, as a result of the "summer slide," there seemed to be a greater loss in factual and procedural knowledge as well as lower scores on standardized tests at the end of summer versus the beginning of summer.
- remediation programs offered during the summer made a positive impact on math achievement in the secondary level.
- remedial programs are more effective when they are small and individualized.
- both remediation and acceleration programs had a positive effect on achievement.
- it had a positive effect on students with disabilities.

Major Conclusions

Program Considerations:

- Plan the program early so that it becomes an important part of the regular school's program.
- Explore what courses the students would want to take during the summer.
- Provide a variety of courses, including remedial and enrichment, from which to choose.
- Offer courses that are not available during the traditional school year.
- Introduce apprenticeship types of programs.



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Additional Considerations:

- Check on salaries, maintenance, supplies, facilities, food service, and transportation.
- Ascertain the expense to students and have a plan for those who want to attend but are unable to afford it.
- Begin close to the beginning of a new term versus the end of the school term.
- Hire teachers from the regular program to teach.
- Promote and support new and innovative pedagogy.
- Establish clear standards for the length and quality of classes.

Online Resources:

- **Discovering Interests and Talents Through Summer Experiences**
This article cites areas of consideration when students are exploring different summer programs.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9216/talents.htm>
- **Is Summer School the Answer or the Problem?**
The question, what are the goals of an effective summer program, is explored in this article.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2001/05/23/37stenvall.h20.html>
- **Making the Most of Summer School**
This article lists key findings taken from 53 summer school programs.
<http://www.ael.org/link/v19n2/make.htm>
- **On Summer Loss**
A brief synopsis of research on summer learning loss conducted at the University of Missouri is provided. Although this has an emphasis on the elementary level, it has an impact on the needs of secondary students.
<http://www.summerlearning.org/research/sumloss.html>
- **School Calendars**
While the main thrust of this article places an emphasis on the examination of the appropriateness of school calendars, it also looks at the challenges and considerations for summer programs.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-2/calendars.html>
- **Sliding out of Summer Learning Loss**
Although aimed primarily at the elementary level, it asks the question about preventing summer learning loss for low SES students. This article briefly describes a program in Baltimore, whose goal is to answer that question.
<http://www.news.wisc.edu/releases/print.php?id=8721>



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- **Some Students Get a Leg Up in Summer School**
This is a brief synopsis of interviews with high school students and why they took summer school courses. Their responses ranged from gaining a higher GPA to repeating a course.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2003/08/06/43summer.h22.html?querysting=summer%20school&print=1>
- **Summer Learning Loss**
A brief overview of research on summer learning loss is provided in this article.
http://www.connectingwithkids.com/tipsheet/2003/125_may21/loss.html
- **Summer Learning Loss: The Problem and Some Solutions**
This article provides a brief synopsis of the traditional school calendar and how it is and is not meeting the needs of students.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-5/summer.htm>
- **Summer School: Quick Facts**
This is a brief statistical synopsis of what is being offered in the U.S. in the area of summer school.
<http://www.ecs.org/html/IssueSection.asp?issueid=121&s=Quick+Facts>
- **Summer School: Selected Readings and Research**
This is an annotated reference list on available in-depth research and resources on various aspects of summer programs. Examples of some of the areas covered are: summer learning loss, ways of using summer time, and state's policies on summer school.
<http://www.ecs.org/html/issueSection.asp?print=true&issueID=121&subIssueID=0&s=Selected+Research+%26+Readings>
- **Time and Learning**
This article cited different methods a school and classroom teacher can utilize in order to best meet the needs of students in a cost effective manner.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-5/time.htm>

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