

# What is Summer Learning Loss?

Research spanning 100 years has proven that students lose ground academically when they are out of school for the summer. The problem is particularly acute among low-income students, who lose an average of more than two months in reading achievement in the summer. By the end of fifth grade, disadvantaged children are nearly three grade equivalents behind their more affluent peers in reading.

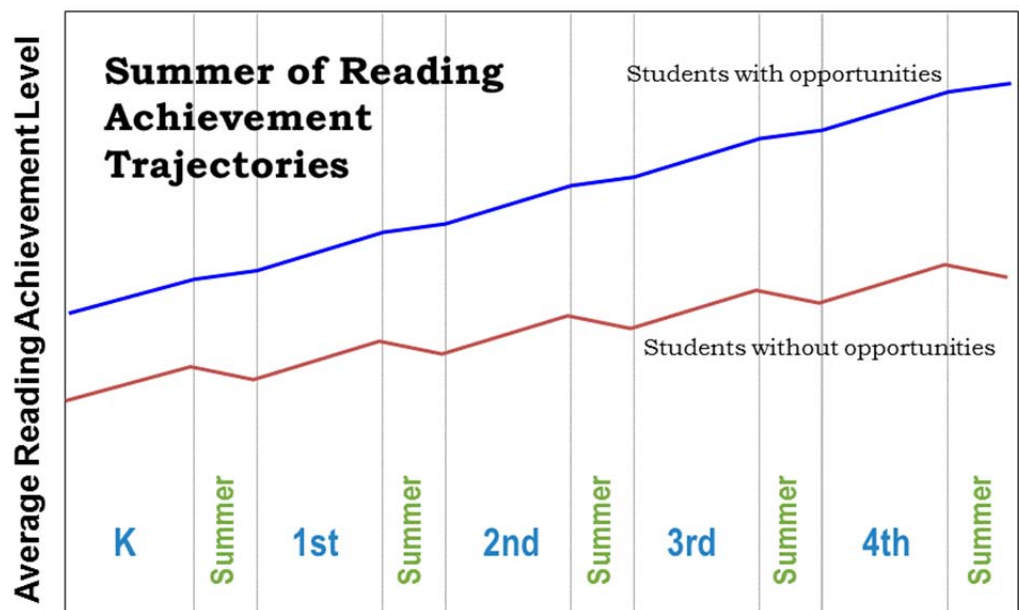
## Why Does it Matter?

Lost time in the summer slows students' progress toward 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency. And it exacerbates the achievement gap since their middle-class peers, who are more likely to be in enrichment programs or reading at home, actually make slight gains over the summer. Eventually, it influences whether students graduate from high school and go on to college.

The research shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer than they do on the same tests at the beginning of summer. While all students slip a bit in math, disadvantaged kids fall behind in both reading skills, as well. More affluent students actually build their reading skills over the summer with parental pressure and various learning opportunities. The cost of re-teaching material when students return from the summer break costs us more than \$1,500 per child, or more than \$18,000 during their K-12 education.

Low-income children also face health and nutrition setbacks over the summer. Children gain weight two or 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. Poor and minority kids are overrepresented in remedial summer school, but often have no access to the sort of enriching summer programs that have been shown to encourage literacy gains. Families who make less than \$44,000 a year often at a loss to find high-quality programs that they can afford.



## **How Do Summer Programs Help?**

- **Summer Programs that incorporate literacy skills into enriching activities can prevent summer learning loss and even improve reading performance.** Students of Horizons summer programs across the country show consistent gains in reading and math of 3 months, measured by DIBELS and STAR Reading and Math assessments. A Yale University study concluded that after participating in Horizons, students show improved attendance, academic performance, classroom participation and leadership skills in the regular school year.
- **Attending summer learning programs for at least two consecutive summers helps to close the achievement gap.** Findings from a randomized, three-year longitudinal study of the Teach Baltimore Summer Academy program suggest that students attending a multi-year summer intervention can return to school having gained close to one-half year in reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- **Library summer reading programs are effective in promoting and improving reading among children and young people.** In a survey of Pennsylvania's public libraries, nearly 75 percent of respondents reported that their book circulation increases between nearly 6 and 10 percent during summer reading time. Librarians stated the benefits provided to children are: improved reading skills, "learning to love reading", increased cultural awareness and academic interest, and greater comfort and familiarity with libraries.
- **Students participating in enriching summer learning made significant gains in academic performance and behavior.** Student participating in summer learning programs such as Energy Express in West Virginia and Higher Achievement in the Washington, D.C., area made significant gains in academic performance and behavior after returning to school in the fall. Reading achievement increased by up to 3.5 months, 62% increased their math grades by a whole letter grade, 73% attended school more frequently, and 45% improved their tardiness.
- **Reading books during summer vacation can improve students' reading proficiency.** A study conducted at Harvard's Center for Evaluation found that reading 4 or 5 books over the summer months had an impact on fall reading achievement comparable to attending summer school. Furthermore, there were no significant differences in achievement based on which type of books children read.
- **Summer programs can address nutritional needs for low-income children.** Maryland's Summer Nutrition Program helps 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 offer enriching learning opportunities.

**For more information visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org) or contact The National Summer Learning Association at 410-856-1370 ext. 100.**