

- 1. Mark your confusion.**
- 2. Show evidence of a close reading.**
- 3. Write a 1+ page reflection.**

15 Critical Facts Everyone Should Know About Summer Learning Loss

Source: onlinecollege.org /May 5, 2015

Summer vacation is a long entrenched tradition for American schoolchildren and their families, but new research is showing that this practice may not be the best when it comes to helping kids get the most out of their educational experience. In fact, for some kids, a few months off in the summer can lead to major setbacks in school, including loss of knowledge and lowered test scores. Many schools, aware of the growing body of evidence that points to the educational problems summer vacations pose, are switching to year-round schedules, but there are many more around the nation that are finding it hard to make the switch due to resistance from teachers, students, and parents alike. Here, we share some facts that can help make understanding why extended summer vacations should be a thing of the past for modern students, especially those who are in high-risk communities where every moment in the classroom counts.

Students score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do at the beginning of summer vacation

While having a few months off for rest and relaxation might seem beneficial to students, it can actually have some serious consequences. The traditional long summer vacation often results in serious learning loss, something researchers have known for more than 100 years now. A century of study has shown that students routinely score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they did just a few months earlier, with low-income and at-risk students seeing the biggest drops, the exact groups so many schools are trying so hard to push to have better test scores.

Students will lose about two months of math computational skills over the summer

When it comes to summer learning loss, math takes one of the biggest hits. On average, students lose about 2.6 months worth of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills during their summer break. With many schools struggling to meet state and federal standards in math, these kinds of losses aren't doing anything to help matters.

Reading and spelling abilities are also affected

Math isn't the only subject that takes a knock over summer vacation. Losses in reading and spelling abilities may also occur, though income may play a significant role in how severe these losses are, or whether or not they occur at all. While middle-income students usually see a rise in reading performance during the summer months, lower-income students may lose two or more months worth of reading achievement. Students at all income levels, however, were likely to lose a month or more of spelling learning skills, the second highest loss in any area.

Students with the biggest losses over the summer are in already higher-risk low income groups

Sadly, the students who see the biggest drops in test scores and educational achievement are those who are in lower-income groups. Income plays a major role in determining just how much learning loss will occur over the summer, with students from middle- or upper-class families undergoing much lower levels of learning loss than their poorer counterparts.

Summer learning loss can follow students through high school, college, and beyond

Summer learning loss isn't a temporary phenomenon. Losses can accumulate over years, eventually resulting in students who perform below their grade level. Low-income students, those who lose the most from time away from school, see the biggest impact, not only reporting lower test scores but higher drop-out rates and lower numbers of students who head to college.

Only 9.2% of America's 48 million students attend summer school

Today, just under 10% of students nationwide participate in summer school or attend schools with non-traditional calendars. That means that more than 90% of students in America will be at risk for potentially damaging summer learning loss.

Parents play a key role in filling in the gaps over the summer

When it comes to helping stanch summer learning loss, parents have a key role to play. Learning loss is much less pronounced, if there at all, in families that enrolled children in classes, took trips to local libraries, participated in reading programs, or took advantage of other, often free, learning opportunities. Numerous studies have shown that children have much better reading outcomes when parents are involved in learning about and helping their children with literacy.

The current 9-month school calendar was established to suit demands that no longer exist

Having a nice, long summer vacation may be an American tradition, but it isn't one that really reflects the needs and demands of the modern world. The traditional academic calendar used in most schools was developed when most families worked in agriculture and air conditioning systems had yet to be invented. Since neither of these are realities in much of America these days, many have argued that long summer breaks simply aren't necessary anymore, especially because they take such a hefty toll on test scores and academic performance.

Much of the achievement gap between disadvantaged youths and their peers can be explained by summer learning loss in elementary school

Because students who are from low-income families have unequal access to summer learning opportunities, many fall behind in their studies and cannot keep up with their wealthier peers. While it might not seem that the summer months would have a big impact on students, it's estimated that as much as two-thirds of the achievement gap is the result of summer learning loss. As a result of these early losses, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or to enter college.

Many parents and students want to engage in summer learning programs but do not have access to them

A 2010 report by the Afterschool Alliance found that, while only 25% of students were currently participating in summer learning programs, many more would like the opportunity to do so. A full 83% of parents supported spending public funds on summer learning programs and 67% of low-income parents said their children would enroll in a summer program if they could.

What students lose in knowledge, they often gain in weight

Students get more than book learning from time spent at school; they also learn to eat a healthy diet. Many depend on the nutritious meals given to them by their school to be able to maintain a healthy diet. When these federally subsidized meals are no longer available to them, students often make poorer food choices, especially when left unsupervised by working parents. Currently, only one in five of the 15.3 million children who participate in the free or reduced lunch program get federally sponsored lunches over the summer. A 2007 study found that most children, especially those already at risk of obesity, gain weight more rapidly over summer break.

Research shows that teachers typically spend between four to six weeks re-teaching material that students have forgotten over the summer

Summer learning loss isn't just bad for students, it also makes things more difficult for educators. In order to come back from losses caused by an extended time away from school, teachers must spend a month or more re-teaching or reviewing material students have already been taught. It goes without saying that this is a huge waste of valuable classroom time that could be better spent teaching students new material.

More than 11% of children between the ages of 6 and 12 care for themselves over the summer months

This means that they are unsupervised, a situation that is not only dangerous but that often leads to greater summer learning losses, as children are not being guided through learning opportunities like trips to the library, museums, or educational vacations. Low-income children are much more likely to be left unsupervised (likely due to the high costs of childcare), a fact that is reflected in greater levels of learning loss.

Out-of-school time can be dangerous for unsupervised children and teens

Students who are alone for most of the day over summer vacation aren't just losing important educational information, they're also being put at a higher risk for dropping out altogether. Unsupervised children and teens are more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors; receive poor grades; and drop out of school than those who are supervised and engaged by adults over the summer months and after school during the school year.

Most summer learning programs are remedial

Sadly, students today have few options for federally- and state-sponsored summer school programs. Summer school has a negative connotation which can make students reluctant to take classes and parents unwilling to enroll them. Why? More than 90% of summer school programs are remedial, targeting only students who are not performing at grade level. While these kinds of programs can be positive for students, studies have shown that year-round education programs and extended school years are far more effective methods of stemming the summer learning loss phenomenon.

Possible Response Questions:

- Does this article make you re-think how you spend your summers? Explain.
- Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.