
Synthesis

Summer schoolsⁱ

Low impact for very high cost, based on extensive evidence



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Summer schools are lessons or classes during the summer holidays. They are often designed as catch-up programmes, although some do not have an academic focus and concentrate on sports or other non-academic activities. Others have a specific aim, such as supporting pupils at the transition from primary to secondary school or preparing high-attaining pupils for university.

How effective is it?

On average, evidence suggests that pupils who attend a summer school make approximately two additional months' progress compared to similar pupils who do not.



Summer schools without a clear academic component are not usually associated with learning gains.

Greater impacts (as much as four additional months' progress) can be achieved when summer schools are intensive, well-resourced, and involve small group tuition by trained and experienced teachers. In contrast, summer schools without a clear academic component are not usually associated with learning gains. Other variables, such as whether the teacher is one of the student's usual teachers, seem to make less difference on average.

Latin American Evidenceⁱⁱ

Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean about the effect of summer schools on learning outcomes are very limited. A quasi-experimental study developed in Mexico with low-academic performance students, shows that students significantly improved their text production skills after attending the summer school.

Another study in Costa Rica evaluates the effect of summer schools on students' disposition towards change in their healthy habits and lifestyle. It shows that students were more enthusiastic towards

engaging in physical activities than before, especially during the following 6 months after the summer program. More research is needed in the region to establish a strong relationship between summer schools participation and learning outcomes in Latin America.

How secure is the evidence?

Overall, the level of evidence related to summer schools is extensive. There are a number of meta-analyses, which consistently find small average effects. Studies include both primary and secondary school pupils and mainly focus on reading and literacy. Some studies indicate that gains are greater for disadvantaged pupils, but this is not consistent.

What are the costs?

Overall, costs are estimated high. They include the employment of teachers for the duration of the summer school, hiring a venue and providing resources (for example, books and photocopying).

What should I consider?

Before you implement this strategy in your learning environment, consider the following:

1. Summer school provision that aims to improve learning needs to have an academic component. Does your summer school include an intensive teaching component (small group or one to one)?
2. Summer schools are relatively expensive. Have you considered providing additional learning time during the school year, which may achieve similar benefits for a lower cost?
3. Maintaining high attendance at summer schools can be a challenge. What steps will you take to engage pupils and their families?

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