Summer Learning 2022

January 2023

Background

As part of the Fulton County School's FOCUS Plan, the district designed more rigorous and larger-scale summer learning opportunities to accelerate learning and curb learning loss that occurred during the pandemic. The elementary and middle school Summer Learning was focused on math and reading skill recovery, while high school Summer Learning was dedicated to credit recovery.

K-8 students were deemed eligible for Summer Learning if they met any of the following criteria:

- scored below grade level on the math or reading iReady screener
- failed math or reading on Milestones
- considered for retention
- recommended by their teacher
- received two or more Fs in core content areas (grades 6-8 only)

9-12 students were required to attend Summer Learning if they failed an EOC course or needed to retake a previously failed course.

Summer Learning was offered in-person at 36 schools: 17 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, and 9 high schools.

High school students could participate in face-to-face Summer Learning or Fulton Virtual School (FVS). 6-8 grade students with a failure in World Language also had the option of FVS. In contrast, elementary and middle school students could participate only in face-to-face Summer Learning.

The Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) contracted Gibson Consulting to evaluate the FOCUS plan, including Summer Learning. The findings in this brief were abbreviated from their Evaluation Report.

Evaluation Questions

The Summer Learning 2022 program evaluation addressed the following questions:

1. To what degree are students participating in SL?
2. For what reasons do invited students not attend SL?
3. What proportion of K-8 students who attended SL avoided a summer slide?
4. What proportion of high school students who attended SL earned high school credits?
5. When compared to a matched sample of non-attending students, did SL affect student growth?
6. How could the planning and implementation of SL be conducted more efficiently and effectively?

Methodology and Data

The Gibson research team used a mixed-method approach to evaluate the program. They provided descriptive quantitative analyses related to student-level data, an impact analysis to estimate the impact of Summer Learning on student outcomes, and results collected from parent and teacher surveys.

To measure the association between participation in the Fulton County Schools (FCS) 2022 Summer Learning program and performance on Fall 2021 iReady Mathematics and Reading scores, the research team at Gibson used propensity score matching to construct a comparison group of students who *did not* participate in 2022 Summer Learning. The

matching was based on baseline academic and non-academic measures, so the comparison group closely resembled students who participated in Summer Learning. Next, Gibson estimated the following statistical model with the matched sample for each iReady subject-area outcome and school level in the 2022-23 school year.

$$y_{ij} = y_{ijt-k}\beta + X_{ijt-1}\gamma + T_{ij}\zeta + a_j + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

To understand the perspectives of families who had a student invited to Summer Learning, Gibson conducted an online survey for parents. FCS directly emailed 35,063 parents whose students were invited to participate in Summer Learning beginning on July 8th, 2022. This survey yielded a 13% response rate.

Gibson invited all Summer Learning teachers to complete a survey about their experiences regarding the planning and implementation of Summer Learning. This survey has an 82% response rate.

Results

Participation

A total of 32,034 students were eligible to attend Summer Learning in 2022 and 10,246 enrolled. However, only 8,491 attended face-to face programming and 581 attended Fulton Virtual School. Like last year, Black and Hispanic students were more likely to participate in Summer Learning.

Students below grade level on the iReady Mathematics or Reading universal screener at the end of the 2021-22 school year were more likely to participate in Summer Learning. Close to half of the students 2 or more years below grade level for either mathematics or reading, as indicated by their scores on end-of-year i-Ready assessments, participated in Summer Learning.

Figure 1: Recommendations for Summer Learning Were Not Evenly Distributed Across Students by Student Race or Ethnicity

Student Race or Ethnicity	# Recommended	% of Recommended Student Groups
Hispanic, any race	6,824	44%
Black	18,353	43%
American Indian	77	35%
Multiracial	1,020	28%
Pacific Islander	15	22%
White	4,385	18%
Asian	1,360	12%
Total	**32,034**	**33%**

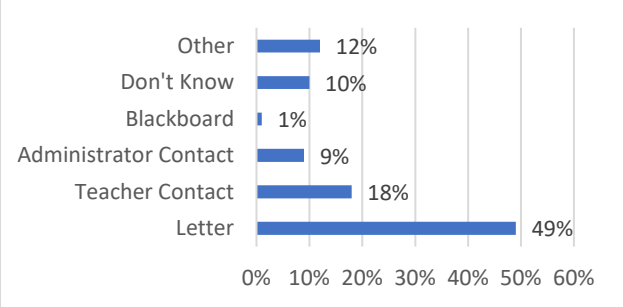
Attendance Rates

Students who attended face-to-face Summer Learning attended approximately 88% of the days they enrolled. Attendance rates were lowest in the elementary grades. Kindergarten students had the lowest attendance rates of all students at 82%.

Parent Experiences

Almost half of the families who participated in the survey reported that the primary way they were invited to participate in Summer Learning was through a formal letter distributed in the Spring of 2022.

Figure 2. Ways in which Parents Received a Summer Learning Invitation



Parents cited several reasons for student enrollment in Summer Learning, with most reasons related to their student's performance on standardized assessments. The most common reason cited was students' i-Ready performance or classroom grades (34% of parents). The second most selected reason was students'

performance on Georgia Milestones (21% of parents).

Most parents who responded to the Summer Learning survey indicated that they found the registration process to be clearly communicated (66.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed) and easy to complete (58.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed). This finding suggests that when parents elected not to enroll their student(s) in Summer Learning, their decision was not frequently based on the inaccessibility of registration information.

Gibson asked parents whose students participated in Summer Learning about their satisfaction with the programming. Here are the key themes:

- The registration process is accessible
- Academics was an important element of Summer Learning
- The location and schedule convenient
- Children had a positive experience
- Requested increased regular communication with teachers during and after Summer Learning

Gibson sought to understand why some parents of invited students did not enroll students in Summer Learning. Of parents whose students did not participate in Summer Learning (n = 1,004), most (53%) reported that they did not want to send their student(s) to Summer Learning. However, a meaningful percentage of parents (35%) reported that they wished for their student(s) to participate, but they could not do so. Of those parents, 40% had previously planned activities that conflicted with the Summer Learning program window. A sizable group of parents reported in the survey that they had vacation or family plans during the same time as Summer Learning (30%). Almost a quarter of parents (22%) reported that Summer Learning hours did not align with their schedules, such as parent work conflicts and transportation challenges. Only 12% of parents who did not send their students to FCS Summer Learning reported sending their students to another campus not associated with FCS.

Teacher Experiences

Most teachers who elected to teach in the summer programming had taught for at least five years, and almost half of the Summer Learning teachers had three or more years of summer learning teaching experience. Most teachers who taught Summer Learning indicated financial compensation as their primary motivation for deciding to teach over the summer.

Teachers were overwhelmingly satisfied with communication prior to the start of Summer Learning.Most teachers agreed that communication was clear and the application process was easy. Teachers were satisfied with the hours and pay for their work during Summer Learning.

Teachers found the Summer Learning curriculum to be adequate and “user-friendly.” Most teachers found professional learning before Summer Learning to be beneficial. Teachers reported positive school climates in their Summer Learning communities. Teachers found enjoyment in working with Summer Learning students in 2022. Teachers said that they saw students grow academically and personally in Summer Learning.

Student Learning Outcomes

About half of the elementary and middle school Summer Learning students avoided a summer slide in reading and mathematics. However, when assessing impact, on average, students who attended Summer Learning had comparable reading and mathematics performance on the Fall 2022 iReady assessment than did the matched comparison.

High School Credit Recovery

93% of students who attended Summer Learning sessions earned at least 0.5-semester course credit. High school students in Summer Learning, on average, earned 0.9 credits. This represented a drop from the average number of credits earned in Summer Learning 2021. However, it is possible that a larger proportion of FCS students needed credits in Summer Learning 2021, given the impact of pandemic-induced school disruptions on student learning during the 2020-21 school year.

Limitations and Considerations

Limitations should be considered when reviewing the results. The district did not track whether students were invited to summer school, only if they met the eligibility criteria. Therefore, we cannot be certain which students were invited and which did not attend.

As a district, we did not track how students could be recommended for Summer Learning. Some teachers recommended that students attend. Therefore, our numbers on participation are based only on the recommendation measures captured in our databases.

The district transitioned to MAP as the standardized assessment for grades 9-12 starting in the Fall of 2021. We could not examine the or the impact of Summer Learning on 8th-grade students since they did not have Fall iReady scores in 2022.

Lastly, the participation rate of the parent survey was very low, and responses should be interpreted with that in mind.

Conclusion

In summary:

- Summer Learning served more kids than it had in its history.
- A third of the students who were eligible for Summer Learning attended.
- Summer Learning did not impact academic outcomes in reading and math.
- On average, high school students earned 0.5-course credits.
- Parents and teachers had positive perceptions of the Summer Learning program.
- The main barriers to accessing summer learning were alternative student activities, family travel plans, parent work commitments, and transportation difficulties.

Recommendations that have surfaced from the evaluation are:

1. Increase and continue to standardize means of communicating about Summer Learning enrollment. Publicize invitation criteria and schedules earlier.
2. Continue to highlight the academic elements of Summer Learning while amplifying the supporting elements of the Summer Learning curriculum.
3. Consider alternate Summer Learning schedules to reach more students.
4. Standardize, increase, and publicize communication expectations for parent-teacher contact during Summer Learning programming.
5. Continue supporting interest and engagement from high-quality, experienced teachers with strategic recruitment efforts.
6. Invite Summer Learning teachers to participate in reflection workshops and planning for future implementation of summer programming.
7. Align the Summer Learning model with evidence-based practices to increase impact.