

# Summer Learning 2021

January 2022

## 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, support students in the adjustment back to in-person 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.

Initially, K-8 students were deemed eligible for Summer Learning if they were below grade level according to the iReady screener which was administered at the end of the 2020-21 school year. High school students were eligible for Summer Learning if they failed or had an incomplete course during Spring 2020, Fall 2020, or Spring 2021. However, FCS administration later opened Summer Learning enrollment to all students.

Summer Learning was offered in-person at 38 school sites:

- 19 elementary schools
- 10 middle schools
- 9 high schools

High school students were eligible to participate in face-to-face Summer Learning or Fulton Virtual School (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 which includes Summer Learning. The findings in this brief were abbreviated from their Evaluation Report.

## Evaluation Questions

The Summer Learning 2021 program evaluation addressed the following questions:

1. To what degree are students participating in FOCUS Plan programming?
2. To what degree are students who need additional services participating in FOCUS Plan programming?
3. To what degree is the implementation of the FOCUS Plan associated with student growth?

## Methodology and Data

DPE and Gibson Consulting collected Summer Learning demographic, enrollment, iReady performance, course completion, and attendance data from students enrolled in the 2021 and 2022 academic years. Secondary data analysis was used to determine which of the eligible students enrolled in Summer Learning.

To measure the association between participation in the Fulton County Schools (FCS) 2021 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 2021 Summer Learning. The matching was based on baseline academic and non-academic measures so that the comparison group closely resembled students who participated. Next, Gibson estimated the following statistical model with the matched sample for each iReady subject-area outcome and school level in the 2021-22 school year. The regression model is listed below:

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

Staff from Gibson and FCS Program Evaluation observed 80 elementary (n = 58) and middle school (n = 22) ELA and Math classrooms in Summer Learning sessions I and II (n = 46 and n = 34, respectively). Observers rated classroom instruction using all 9 domains of the FCS Cross-Discipline Instructional Growth Rubric (CD-IGR) and 15 selected domains from the standardized Danielson Framework Rubric.

The Gibson research team garnered an understanding of the implementation of Summer Learning 2021 through three data collection methods. This included unstructured in-person interviews with a selection of Summer Learning principals. A 2-hour debrief meeting was conducted with Summer Learning principals and FCS district administrators, and a 2-hour semi-structured virtual interview with the Director of Summer Learning.

## Results

### Participation

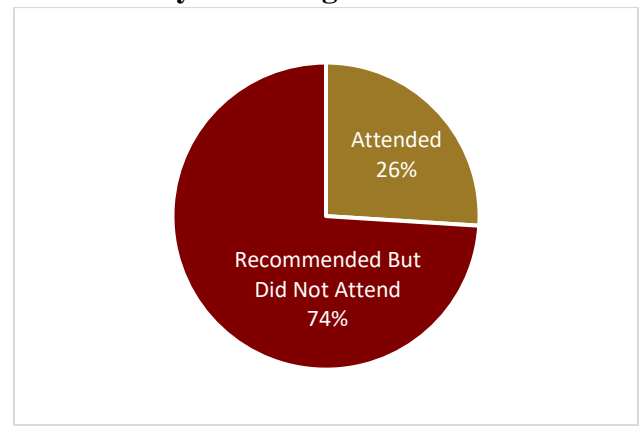
A total of 8,914 students attended face-to-face Summer Learning in 2021. This is the largest total number of students attending a Summer Learning program in FCS history. However, most students who were invited to participate in Summer Learning did not participate. Of the 37,860 students recommended to participate in Summer Learning, 20% of them attended summer learning.

Participation rates were not consistent across student groups. Black and Hispanic students were more likely to participate, as were exiting Kindergarten students and high school students. Students who were below grade level on the iReady Mathematics or Reading universal

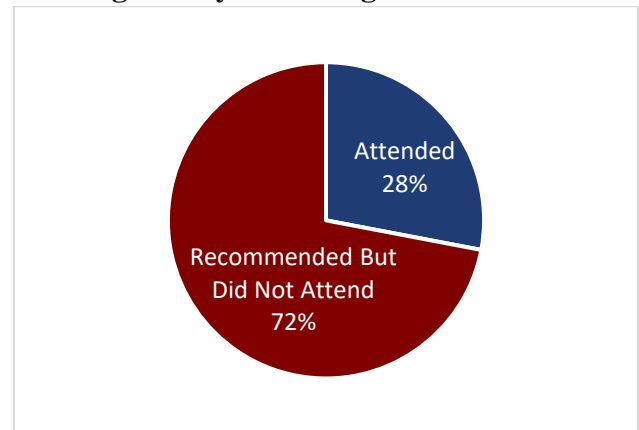
screeners at the end of the 2020-21 school year were more likely to participate in Summer Learning.

The graphs below show that about a quarter of students with the highest academic need attended summer learning.

**Figure 1: Percent of Student 2+ Grades Below Math iReady Attending Summer School**



**Figure 2: Percent of Student 2+ Grades Below Reading iReady Attending Summer School**



### Attendance Rates

Students who attended face-to-face Summer Learning attended approximately 88% of days in which they enrolled. Kindergarten students had the lowest attendance rates of all students.

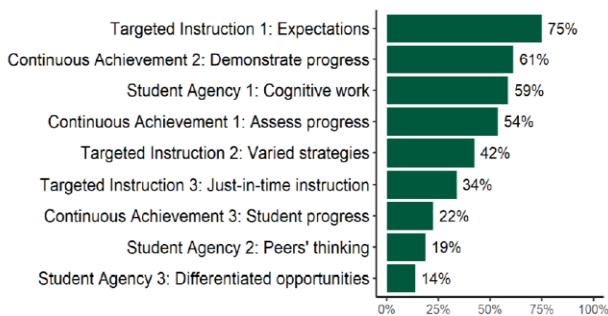
Students in Zones 6 and 7 had higher attendance rates than students in other Zones. Importantly, students who received free or reduced lunch had a lower average attendance rate (87%) than students who did not receive free or reduced lunch (90%).

## Instruction

Observed Summer Learning class sizes were particularly small, with an average of 7.6 students in each observed class. Smaller classes in Summer Learning provide an excellent opportunity for differentiated instruction, which can be maximized with additional professional learning for Summer Learning teachers.

Observation scores were generally higher on topics related to high instructional expectations and generally lower on topics related to differentiated instruction.

**Figure 3. Percent of Teachers Demonstrating Effective Instructional Practice on the Cross-Discipline Rubric**



FCS staff consistently noted that they believed Summer Learning could have been more effectively and efficiently implemented if planning for Summer Learning programming had started earlier in the 2020-21 school year. The scope of Summer Learning programming expanded during the Spring 2021 semester, making planning efforts especially difficult.

## Summer Slide K-7

Over half (54%) of all K-7 students attending face-to-face Summer Learning either maintained or grew their iReady Mathematics performance from EOY 2020-21 to BOY 2021-22. For all grade levels, a larger percentage of students who attended Summer Learning maintained or grew their iReady Mathematics performance compared to students who did not participate.

Two-thirds (67%) of all students attending face-to-face Summer Learning either maintained or grew their iReady Reading performance over Summer 2021. However, unlike in math, the percentage of Summer Learning attendees who maintained or grew their performance was similar to the percentage of the general population of FCS students who maintained or grew their performance and did not attend Summer Learning.

## Impact K-7

On average, students who attended face-to-face Summer Learning generally had higher mathematics performance at BOY 2021-22 than the matched comparison. Effects were more significant for students in the upper elementary grades (i.e., 4th and 5th grades) than those in lower elementary grades.

On average, students who attended face-to-face Summer Learning generally had comparable reading performance at BOY 2021-22 than the matched comparison.

## High School Credit Recovery

97.6% of students who attended Summer Learning sessions earned at least one semester course credit. Students earned about 1.5 course credits on average. Students who were English learners, received special education services, or who received free or reduced lunch were more

likely to earn credit in face-to-face Summer Learning than in Fulton Virtual School.

## Limitations and Considerations

Limitations should be considered when reviewing the results. The district did not track students invited to summer school based on teacher recommendations. Therefore, we cannot be certain which students were invited and did not attend.

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

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

## Conclusion

In summary:

- Summer Learning served more kids than it had in its history.
- A small percentage of the students who were eligible for Summer Learning attended.
- For the K-7 students who attended, there was a positive impact on reducing summer slide and increasing iReady performance in math.
- Summer slide prevention and impact was not evident in Reading for K-7 students.
- On average, high school students earned 1.5-course credits.

## Recommendations that have surfaced from the evaluation are:

1. Ensure planning procedures so Summer Learning begins early.
2. Provide teacher professional learning on differentiation & small group instruction to maximize small class sizes more effectively.
3. Examine ELA curriculum and practices to improve ELA outcomes.
4. Establish systems to improve enrollment for students in most academic need.
5. Conduct qualitative research to determine why students did not attend summer learning.