

Springboard Collaborative

Problem

“Summer slide” is a widely-documented phenomenon¹ in which students lose educational gains from the schoolyear during the summer months. In fact, several researchers argue that most of the achievement gap between majority and minority students can be explained and accounted for by the summer loss accumulated over 12 years of education.² While summer slide affects all students, it disproportionately hurts low-income children who have few high-quality summer learning opportunities relative to their higher-income peers.³ Consequently, losses in reading and language skills are unevenly distributed across the socioeconomic spectrum: lower-income students lose approximately 2 months of reading proficiency during the summer, while middle-income students make slight reading gains.⁴

Solution

Programs that provide high-quality summer literacy instruction to low-income students can sustain and even improve reading skills for students at high risk of summer slide. In doing so, they can help narrow the achievement gap.

High Impact Opportunity

Springboard Collaborative, a nonprofit based in Philadelphia, runs a five-week intensive summer literacy program for students and their families. Springboard’s model takes a hands-on approach to involving parents – not just teachers and students – in literacy learning. Since its 2011 launch as a pilot with 42 students, the program has grown to serve over 1,200 students in 20 schools in low-income communities across Philadelphia and neighboring Camden, NJ. Springboard will also be launching a site in Oakland, California in summer of 2015, increasing the number of students served to over 2,000.

How it Works

Before programming begins, teachers in the Springboard summer literacy program visit each of their students’ homes to meet and build buy-in from parents. Students then attend daily half-day literacy classes, capped at 15 students each, for five weeks. Students are grouped by reading level rather than grade level to allow teachers to focus instruction. Once a week, teachers also lead

family workshops, where parents learn how to choose appropriate books for, and co-read with, their children. Parents and children alike are encouraged to read at home, both together and separately.

Springboard incentivizes parents and children by offering “learning bonuses” – free books, school supplies, and even tablets – at the end of the program, based on both student growth and parent attendance. Throughout the five weeks, a school-based Site Manager coaches each teacher to ensure all classrooms reach the finish line.



Image provided by Springboard Collaborative

In 2013, the Springboard team expanded their service model beyond the flagship summer literacy program to better meet the diverse needs of students and their families. Springboard now offers year-round programming with varying levels of comprehensiveness based on the students’ reading performance. The new programs include:

- Springboard Schoolyear, piloted in the 2013-2014 academic year, which trains teachers to target instruction and coach families in order to accelerate struggling readers’ progress during the academic year. This intervention spans the 3rd quarter of the school year and features a combination of teacher coaching, small-group instruction, family training workshops, and incentives. Springboard Schoolyear is geared toward students who need the most support to make reading gains each year.
- Springboard@home, to be piloted in 2015, which provides an alternative to the five-week summer literacy program for higher-performing students. Participating families receive customized libraries and literacy training to maintain and develop their children’s reading skills over the summer. This intervention combines access to a leveled library, weekly online workshops, interactive content, and incentives.

What's the Impact?

To assess reading skills for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, Springboard uses the Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd Ed. (DRA2), a test used widely by schools around the country. In the DRA2, students meet one-on-one with their teacher, read a passage(s) aloud, and answer verbal prompts about the reading. These activities allow teachers to track both fluency and comprehension. Scores on the DRA2 for years K-3 typically range from 1 to 38, with points scaled to correspond roughly to “school-months”—i.e., a typical schoolyear has ten months (Sept – June), and student scores are expected to increase by 10 points per year.⁵

Springboard Summer students take the DRA2 three times: first, when they start the program, second, midway through the program when they complete a shortened “progress monitoring” version of the DRA2, and finally, at the end of the program. In the summer of 2014, children who attended Springboard’s five-week program experienced, on average, a 3.4-point gain in DRA2 scores instead of the usual loss (“summer slide”) of 1-3 points. In total, 98% of participating students avoided summer slide entirely.⁶

The program also demonstrated improvements for students about to enter elementary school. Average scores on Springboard’s own kindergarten-readiness reading test improved from 41% to 58%, and the portion of students considered ready for kindergarten jumped from 26% to 63%.⁷

In its pilot year, Springboard Schoolyear’s students made double the average reading progress in a marking period than they did prior to receiving the intervention; on average, these students made 1.7 months of progress (a 1.7 point gain on the DRA2) in their 2nd marking period, but after participating in Springboard Schoolyear programming in their 3rd marking period, they made an average of 3.4 months of progress (a 3.4 point gain on the DRA2).⁸

Additional Social Impact

Parent Engagement and Skill-building: Students in low-income communities often lack continuous access to learning at home and school, which can result in slow progress during the schoolyear and chronic regressions over the summer. Springboard’s model is built on the idea that parents play a critical role in enabling children to make academic progress both in and out of school. In order to equip parents and families to support their child’s learning, Springboard Summer offers weekly workshops that train caregivers on how to pick a book on their child’s reading level and what to do before, during, and after reading. Over 90% of families attend these weekly training workshops during the summer program.⁹

What Does it Cost to Implement?

Springboard's summer program costs fall into 2 categories:

- Teacher training and pay
- Program operations (operations staff, curricular materials, etc.)

Partner schools cover a portion of these costs, paying teachers directly and contributing a per-pupil partnership fee to Springboard Collaborative to cover a portion of program operations. Teacher pay amounts to about \$325-375 per pupil for the 5-week program, and the partnership fee is set at \$550 per pupil with a discounting structure that incentivizes strong partnerships (i.e. multi-year agreements, re-enrollment, etc.)

The total cost of providing Springboard Collaborative's summer program to a child ranges from \$950 to \$1,000 depending on the particular site's expenditures for teacher pay and the per-pupil fee to the program.

Cost per Impact

Based on the program's current cost structure and impact results, we estimate that the program costs between \$979 and \$1,020 per incremental student avoiding summer slide. Because much of the cost is covered by the district and school partners, it is worth noting that the philanthropic cost per impact of Springboard's summer program ranges from \$25 to \$351 per incremental student avoiding summer slide.

For additional information on linking cost and impact, click [here](#).

Take Action

Visit Springboard Collaborative's [website](#) to find out more information about its programs, district sites, and school partners. Click [here](#) for suggestions of other programs that prepare kids to be strong readers.

SNAPSHOT

CORE PRACTICE: Closing the 'summer slide' achievement gap by providing a five-week intensive summer literacy program for low-income students and their parents.

TARGETED BENEFICIARIES: Low-income pre-k and elementary-aged students and their parents.

IMPACT ACHIEVED: Increased reading scores in kindergarten-readiness and kindergarten through 3rd grade literacy; in total, 82% of students in the five-week program avoid 'summer slide' entirely.

COST/IMPACT OR COST-BENEFIT: The philanthropic cost per impact of Springboard's summer program ranges from \$6 to \$194 per incremental student avoiding summer slide.

¹ A meta-analysis by Cooper, et al, reviews 39 studies spanning 90+ years (download full text). Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: a narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66. Retrieved from http://psychandneuro.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/summer-learning-loss.original.pdf

² Entwisle, D.R. & Alexander, K.L. (1992). Summer setback: Race, poverty, school composition and mathematics achievement in the first two years of school. *American Sociological Review*, 57. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2096145>

Entwisle, D.R., Alexander, K.L. & Olson, L.S. (1997). *Children, schools, and inequality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Heyns, B. (1978). *Summer learning and the effects of schooling*. New York: Academic Press.

³ See discussion of differential home- and community-based learning opportunities by socioeconomic status in: Alexander, K.L, Olsen, L.S., & Entwisle, D.R. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72. Retrieved from <http://www.nayre.org/Summer%20Learning%20Gap.pdf>

⁴ These results from Cooper, et al, op. cit., p. 257, 1996

⁵ For an example of how the DRA2 is used by a school system to assess grade-level benchmarks, see this guide used by the State of Connecticut's Dept. of Education: Connecticut State Department of Education. DRA2 Developmental Reading Assessment, Second Edition, Questions and Answers. Retrieved from <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/publications/dra2/dra2.pdf>

⁶ Based on assessment data captured by participating teachers and administrative staff of Springboard Collaborative.

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