

Research Post #2: Summer Vacation

The intent of this post is to share in an informal way, some conclusions typically found in abstracts of research articles. Readers are encouraged to read the sources below and draw their own conclusions.

For over a century, we have known that summer vacation has an adverse impact on student achievement. The current school calendar was designed for an agriculture-based society that no longer exists. Recent information has suggested that only about three percent of U.S. citizens have a direct working relationship to the agriculture field (Hattie, page 81). Any teacher can point to summer vacation time as a problem for students in terms of retention of information. The first study on this topic was recorded in 1906! (Von Drehle) In 1996, Harris Cooper and colleagues looked at a century's worth of academic studies and concluded, on average, all students lose about a month in math skills. Even more concerning is that students in poverty, on average, lose three months of learning compared to students of middle class families (Von Drehle). For more information, see also Cooper and others. This negative impact tends to increase, as students get older (Cooper). A major study by Johns Hopkins University tracked students from kindergarten through high school. They concluded that during the school year students made similar progress regardless of economic status. During the summer, students in middle or upper class families either stayed the same or actually improved achievement. Disadvantaged students fell behind; by the end of elementary school, low-income students had fallen nearly three grade levels behind. "According to the study, by ninth grade, summer learning loss could be blamed for roughly two-thirds of the achievement gap separating income groups" (Von Drehle).

While Calendar 2.0 does not address all of the achievement gap concerns caused by summer vacation, it does provide for two weeks less of summer vacation and also allows for intersession periods during the school year to provide students who have fallen behind with the time and supports they may need to close the achievement gap.

Sources:

- Cooper, Harris and others. *The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review*. Review of Educational Research, Fall 1996, Vol. 66, no.3 pp 227-268.

- Hattie, John. Visible Learning: A synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement. Routledge Publishing, New York, New York. Pg. 80-81.
- Von Drehle, D. *The Case Against Summer Vacation*. Time Magazine July 22, 2010. Cover Story.