

“Summer” Learning Loss: June to November K-2 Independent Reading Levels (2015-16 to 2018-19)

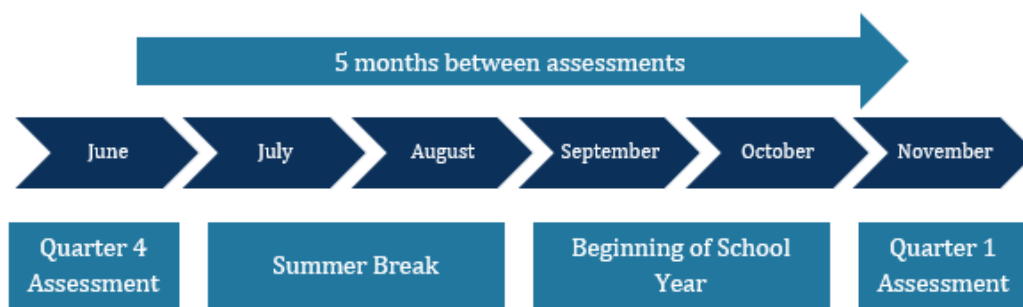
Giselle Saleet, Data Analyst; Kristyn Stewart, Senior Research Associate

What is Summer Learning Loss?

Summer is still a critical time for learning. Research shows that students’ skills often decline during the summer, with low-income students experiencing an average summer loss of about two months of reading achievement. By fifth grade, this decline can leave low-income students 2.5 to 3 years behind their peers.¹

For this brief, we examined the prevalence of “summer” learning loss in Philadelphia by analyzing the change in K-2 student independent reading levels between the spring (near the end of one school year) and the fall (near the beginning of the next school year). “Summer” encompasses the five months that pass between student assessment periods (June to November), including approximately three months of summer vacation and two months of instruction (Figure 1). Due to the timing of assessments, it’s possible for a student to experience learning loss but then return to the same reading level by the time they are assessed in November.

Figure 1. Timeline of Assessment Periods



¹ Smith, M., & Brewer, D. (2007). Stop Summer Academic Loss: An Education Policy Priority. Grade Level Reading.

This brief focuses on three guiding questions:

1. What changes (if any) in independent reading levels did K-2 students experience between the Quarter 4 (June) assessment and Quarter 1 (November) assessment across three years?
2. Did changes vary based on grade level?
3. Did changes vary based on student demographics?

The main limitation of this study is the timeline of assessments. There are five months between Quarter 4 (spring) and Quarter 1 (fall) assessment periods. Two of those five months are spent learning new instructional material. The timeline does not allow for a student assessment before the introduction of new material and thus does not reflect student performance at the start of the school year.

Findings

Nearly two-thirds (61%) of K-2 students experienced a decrease or had no change in their independent reading levels from June to November.

When examining data that spanned three years of June to November data (Quarter 4 to Quarter 1), the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) found that 22% of K-2 students had experienced a decrease in their independent reading levels (bottom row of Table 1). Given the timeline of assessments, the students with no change in their reading levels could have experienced summer learning loss but regained levels after being in school for two months. On average, 39% of K-2 students had no change in their reading levels. Looking at three years of June to November data, 39% of students experienced an increase in reading levels after those two months of instructional time, compared to 61% of students experiencing a decrease or no change.

Table 1. A high percentage of students experienced a decrease or had no change in independent reading levels across three years

Time Period	Number of K-2 students in sample	Change from June to November		
		Percent of students whose reading level decreased	Percent of students with no change in reading level	Percent of students whose reading level increased
June 2016 – November 2016	21,686	21%	39%	41%
June 2017 – November 2017	21,031	22%	37%	40%
June 2018 – November 2018	22,894	24%	39%	37%
Three-year average	65,611	22%	39%	39%

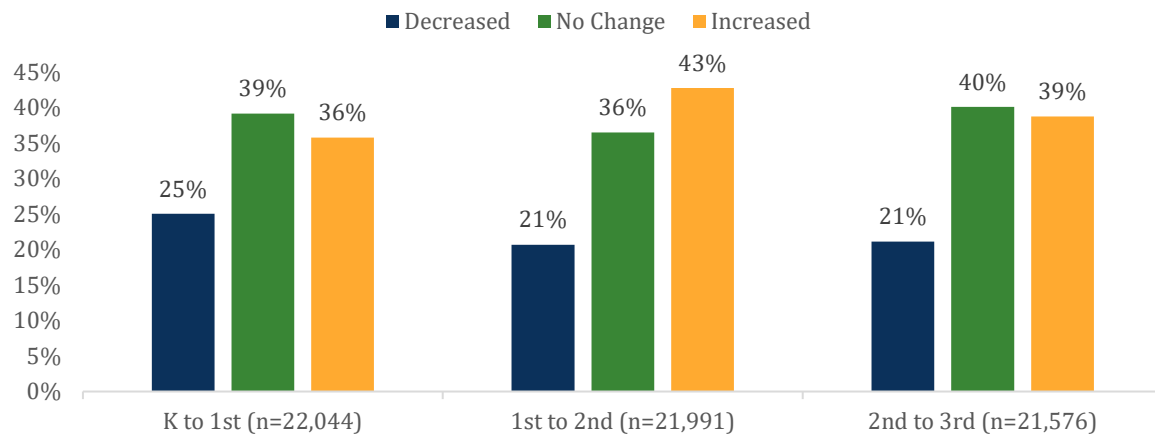
Source: MicroStrategy Archive and Qlik Reading Levels App, data pulled on March 19, 2019.

During the three-year study period, “summer” learning loss was highest between kindergarten and 1st grade.

A quarter (25%) of kindergarten students experienced a decrease in their independent reading levels between June of their kindergarten year and November of 1st grade (Figure 2).

Approximately one-fifth of students experienced a decrease between June of 1st grade and November of 2nd grade (21%) and between June of 2nd grade and November of 3rd grade (21%).

Figure 2. A higher percentage of students experienced a decrease in independent reading levels between kindergarten and 1st grade compared to transitions to 2nd and 3rd grade across three years



Across grades K-2, a greater percentage of Hispanic/Latino students, Black/African American students, and students designated as English Learners, Special Education, or economically disadvantaged experienced a decrease in their reading levels compared to their peers.

A smaller percentage of white and Asian students experienced a decrease in their independent reading levels (16%) compared to Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students (24% and 26%, respectively; see Table 2). A higher percentage (24%) of English learners and students receiving special education services experienced a decrease in their independent reading levels compared to their peers (Table 3).

Table 2. Hispanic/Latino students had the highest percentage of students experience a decrease in their independent reading levels across three years

Race/Ethnicity	Number of K-2 students in sample (a)	Change from June to November		
		Percent of students whose reading level decreased (b)	Percent of students with no change in reading level (c)	Percent of students whose reading level increased (d)
White	10,784	16%	40%	44%
Asian	5,401	16%	40%	44%
Multi-Racial/Other	5,189	20%	39%	41%
Black/African American	28,946	24%	37%	38%
Hispanic/Latino	15,088	26%	39%	35%

Source: MicroStrategy Archive and Qlik Reading Levels App, data pulled on March 19, 2019.

How to read this table: This table compares the number of students by race/ethnicity (a) to the percentage of students across other groups who experienced a decrease, no change, or an increase in their independent reading levels (columns b through d).

Table 3. A higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, and special education students experienced decreases in their independent reading levels compared to their peers

	Economically Disadvantaged (n=45,333) (a)	Not Economically Disadvantaged (n=20,278) (a)	English Learners (n=8,223) (b)	Non English Learners (57,388) (b)	Special Education Students ^a (n=4,517) (c)	General Education Students (n=61,094) (c)
Decreased	24%	18%	24%	22%	24%	22%
No Change	39%	38%	41%	38%	41%	38%
Increased	37%	43%	35%	40%	35%	40%

^aSpecial Education students may have more than one status. In this sample, 20 students had a secondary gifted status.

Source: MicroStrategy Archive and Qlik Reading Levels App, data pulled on March 29, 2019.

How to read this table: This table allows you to compare the percentage of student subgroups [economically disadvantaged (a), English learners (b), and Special Education(c)] who experienced a decrease, no change, or an increase in their independent reading levels to their peer group counterparts.

Conclusion

“Summer” learning loss for K-2 students was calculated as the change in independent reading levels from June to November. Although the first two months of instruction of the new school year may help K-2 students recover some reading loss, we found that 22% of students have lower independent reading levels in November compared to June of the previous school year. In addition, across three school years, a disproportionate percentage of Hispanic/Latino students, Black/African American students, and students who are designated as English Learners, Special Education, or economically disadvantaged experienced summer learning loss compared to their peers.