



Why We Must Make Summer Central to Learning

The effort to improve student outcomes in the Tuscaloosa City Schools has now moved beyond the confines of a traditional school year. The system's move to close the achievement gap now includes providing high-quality summer learning as a central strategy.

Superintendent Dr. Mike Daria said that the early results show that this strategy is working.

"The work we're doing in summer is working," said Daria. "We can see that and we need more of it and we need to reach more students."

For Daria, the work aligns with the [system's Strategic Plan](#) to close the achievement gap by reducing barriers to learning.

In the summer of 2019, students who attended a summer learning program experienced learning outcomes between one and ten months better than their peers who did not.

[See the report.](#)

Summer 2019 Results

1,403 students served, including 27 percent of all elementary students

K-2 reading - lost less than peers who did not attend

3-5 reading - zero loss (non-attending peers lost an average of 4 months)

6-8 reading - gained 1 month (non-attending peers lost an average of 9 months)

3-5 math - gained 1 month (non-attending peers lost an average of 2 months)

6-8 math - gained 1.5 months (non-attending peers lost an average of 2 months)



In short, TCS found summer learning was beneficial to student learning and an effective strategy for preventing loss during time away from the regular school year.

Our mission moving forward?

- Summer learning is core to our mission
- Community-wide collective impact model offering:
 - Partnerships
 - Communication
 - Training
 - Support

The district is committed to:

- Significantly expanding offerings
- Increasing program effectiveness and outcomes
- Improving efficiency
- Prioritizing K-2 programming
- Facilitating the development of a community-wide commitment to summer learning

What does the research say?

- [Summer learning loss happens to all students, but has greater effects on students living in poverty](#)
- Participation in quality summer learning programs dramatically slows summer learning loss
- Summer learning programs work best when students chose to participate

Additional reading:

- [The Importance of Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs in African-American and Latino Communities](#)¹
- [Keep the Faucet Flowing](#)
- [Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap](#)²
- [Making Summer Count](#)³
- [Summer Learning that Sticks](#)⁴
- [US News and World Report article](#)
- [Why We Must Prioritize Summer Learning](#)⁵



What Does This Look Like?

Summer learning remains optional but designed to meet the needs of students and families. In TCS, this means:

- Equitable access
- Affordable
- Strong academics and strong enrichment in all programs
- Full day (mirrors a school day)
- City-wide collaborative work for planning and funding
- School-based and community-based summer program
- “Braided” funding: district, federal, grant-based, local, and parental contributions
- National summer learning model

To learn more about how you or your organization can become part of the effort to end summer learning loss in Tuscaloosa, contact Andrew Maxey, Director of Special Programs at 205.759.3722 or amaxey@tusc.k12.al.us

¹ Afterschool, A. (2013). The Importance of Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs in African-American and Latino Communities. Afterschool Alert. Issue Brief No. 59. Afterschool Alliance

² Alexander, L. K., Entwisle D. R., & Olson S. L. (2007). Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap. American Sociological Review, (2), 167.

³ McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C., Schwartz, H., Bodilly, S., McInnis, B., Lichter, D., & Cross, A. B. (2012). Making Summer Count. Education Digest, 77(6), 47.

⁴ Brown, D. (2016). Summer learning that sticks. Phi Delta Kappan, 98(4), 15. doi:10.1177/003172176681771

⁵ Leefatt, S. (2015). The Key to Equality: Why We Must Prioritize Summer Learning to Narrow the Socioeconomic Achievement Gap. Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal, 2015(2), 549-584.