

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

GPL Policy Briefs

Georgia Policy Labs

7-2021

The Impact of Virtual Summer School on Student Achievement Growth During COVID-19

Alexa Prettyman

UCLA, aprettyman@g.ucla.edu

Tim Sass

Georgia State University, tsass@gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/gpl_policybriefs



Part of the [Education Policy Commons](#), [Policy Design, Analysis, and Evaluation Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Prettyman, Alexa and Sass, Tim, "The Impact of Virtual Summer School on Student Achievement Growth During COVID-19" (2021). *GPL Policy Briefs*. 31.

https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/gpl_policybriefs/31

This Policy Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the Georgia Policy Labs at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in GPL Policy Briefs by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

How did virtual summer school during COVID-19 impact learning in elementary and middle school?

Research conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that summer programs tend to improve student achievement growth in math and have a mixed impact for reading. In this project, we analyzed whether elementary and middle school students in a metro-Atlanta district benefited from a virtual summer school program during the pandemic.

What did we learn?

Only 25% of the students expected to attend virtual summer school actually participated. They logged in 8 days on average during the 8-week program and spent 11 hours completing tasks.

Students who were more engaged during the spring semester seemed to benefit more from summer school.

Summer school students experienced a one-half month gain in math achievement on average, relative to non-participants. Most of the gains are concentrated among elementary school students, not middle school students. There were no gains in reading.

Due to limited data, we could only compare participants to non-participants. It's possible that better-performing students chose to attend summer school, which could partially explain the higher math achievement.

What are the policy implications?

Mandate or encourage better participation: Districts may wish to consider mandating summer school participation, informing parents of potential benefits, or providing incentives to encourage participation in any future programs in the summer or during breaks in the academic calendar.

Data collection: In addition, the use of clear and objective assignment rules and better documentation of who is expected to attend summer school would facilitate a rigorous analysis of the program's efficacy.

Researchers

Alexa Prettyman
Tim Sass

Published

July 2021

What questions did we answer?

1. Who participated in the virtual summer school? How do participants differ from non-participants?
2. Did virtual summer school mitigate reductions in student achievement growth associated with the COVID-19 pandemic?

What data did we use?

We used spring assignment completion records, summer school files, and administrative records from the spring of school year 2019-20 to the fall of school year 2020-21. From these data, we know the demographic characteristics and academic achievement, measured via i-Ready scores, of summer school participants and non-participants.

Why is this issue important?

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, average student achievement growth declined over the past year. School districts in Georgia received just over \$3.8 billion to implement programs for students that combat the consequences of the pandemic. Various remediation strategies have been discussed, including high-intensity tutoring, acceleration academics, and summer school. This study helps to inform policymakers on how to best allocate funds to ensure student success.

What will we study next?

MAPLE researchers continue to dig into the effects of the pandemic on students. We are studying student engagement during remote learning, analyzing how parents chose their student's learning mode, and unpacking unexpected findings, like relatively milder impacts on girls and students with disabilities.

Want to learn more?

A report is available at
gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications

The **Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE)** at the **Georgia Policy Labs (GPL)** is a collaboration between Georgia State University and a variety of government agencies to promote evidence-based policy development and implementation. Our goal is to have positive, equitable outcomes for every child, student, and family in Georgia.

Suggested citation

Prettyman, A., & Sass, T. (2021). *How did virtual summer school during COVID-19 impact learning in elementary and middle school?* Georgia Policy Labs.