

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 213

UD 026 346

AUTHOR Ascher, Carol
TITLE Summer School, Extended School Year, and Year-Round Schooling for Disadvantaged Students. ERIC/CUE Digest Number 42.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Apr 88
CONTRACT RI-88062013
NOTE 4p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027 (single copies free, include stamped self-addressed envelope).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Administrative Problems; Compensatory Education; Curriculum Problems; *Economically Disadvantaged; Educationally Disadvantaged; Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; *Extended School Year; Parent Influence; Remedial Programs; Secondary School Students; Summer Programs; *Summer Schools; Supplementary Education; Teacher Effectiveness; Urban Schools; *Year Round Schools

ABSTRACT

Recent research shows no significant educational benefits from providing summer schools, extended school years, or year-round schooling to disadvantaged students. However, the severe educational difficulties faced by these students, combined with the many practical reasons for deviating from the traditional school year, are strong reasons why educators continue to hope for improvements in student achievement from these programs. While it is unfair to expect such improvements without a clear picture of how students learn over time, it is also clear that the programs themselves are in need of improvement. Program management problems associated with summer school include the following: (1) short duration; (2) loose organization; (3) little time for advance planning; (4) low academic expectations; (5) emphasis on "fun"; (6) discontinuity between the curriculum of the regular year and summer school; (7) time lost to establishment of teacher-student relationships; (8) teacher fatigue; (9) low attendance rate; and (10) homogeneous classes. Problems associated with year-round schooling include the following: (1) curriculum changes when schools switch from 9-month to year-round; (2) lack of support and assistance to teachers in adapting to the change; (3) insufficient provision for teacher fatigue; (4) administrative complexity of staggered schedules in secondary schools; and (5) parent objections. Additional research is needed on both student learning and the effects of various program components. A list of 10 references is included. (Author/FMW)

ED 298213

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON URBAN EDUCATION DIGEST NUMBER 42

SUMMER SCHOOL, EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR, AND YEAR-ROUND
SCHOOLING FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

CAROL ASCHER

D026346
ERIC
Full Text Provided by ERIC
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

SUMMER SCHOOL, EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR, AND YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLING FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Educators are interested in summer school, year-round schooling, and extended school years for both educational and practical reasons. Educationally, summer school has been advocated as a strategy to improve achievement, increase attendance, (Ballinger, 1987), reduce the number of students who must repeat a grade (Dougherty, 1981) and lower the dropout rate (Heyns, 1986). By law, summer school can now be part of the individualized programs of compensatory and handicapped education students, since, according to the argument of specialists in the field, summer is a time to stem losses, remedy deficiencies, and accelerate achievement (Heyns, 1986). Similarly, year-round schooling—whether or not it adds to the total number of days of school—eliminates summer vacations, when many students lose ground, therefore, it too has been advocated as a means to eliminate these summer losses (Merino, 1983). Extended school years, which offer additional days of schooling, have also been advocated by several commissions that cite research suggesting that increasing time-on-task can raise student achievement.

In addition, summer schools, extended school years, and year-round schooling are also often instituted as solutions to one or more of the following practical problems: the need to ease overcrowding, increase school building efficiency, raise teachers' salaries, decrease instructional costs, and provide supervision for children of working parents (Merino, 1983).

There is evidence, however, that, at best, increasing school time results in only modest improvements in achievement, and that the costs of this extension are disproportionate to any instructional gains (Mazzarella, 1984). Several schools around the nation, having tried year-round schooling (with and without additional total days), have abandoned it because the savings were negligible, student achievement didn't differ, and it was unpopular with parents and students (Merino, 1983). At the same time, students who attend summer school programs (whether they are retainees, compensatory education students, or regular students) generally do no better afterwards than those who did not attend (Heyns, 1986).

Summer Learning

The common educational rationale for adding on school days through summer school or extended school years is that the more time a student spends in the class the better.

Yet surprisingly little classroom time is well-used for learning under ordinary circumstances, and extending class time does not necessarily increase the time students spend learning (Blai, 1986). Moreover, there are variations in students' effort over time, as well as spurts and hiatuses in learning, that have not yet been differentiated from apparent results of different school schedules or increased schooling (Heynes, 1978).

Research on summer learning is surprisingly scarce, and focused mainly on elementary students, nevertheless, several points emerge: First, although the learning rates of children from advantaged families decrease somewhat during the summer, disadvantaged students lose ground dramatically during the summer (Heyns, 1986, 1978). Second, adding days or instituting extended school years or summer school programs does not necessarily increase learning. In fact, schools maintaining a nine-month schedule may actually have an edge over year-round schooling that creates shorter vacation periods without adding to instructional time (Merino, 1983). Nor do disadvantaged students receive clear benefits from attending compensatory summer school programs (Carter, 1984).

So far we know almost nothing about summer programs for disadvantaged middle and high school students. One intensive, experimental summer high school program, STEP, which combines academic learning, life skills, and employment has had somewhat beneficial results during its two years in existence, both staying achievement losses and producing slight gains (Sipe, Grossman & Milliner, 1987).

Finally, as Heyns (1986) points out, without a valid expected growth curve against which to measure summer achievement, it is not clear whether the effectiveness of any summer school should be measured as "gains" or as "arrested losses" for either advantaged or disadvantaged children.

Program Management

Given the desperate needs of disadvantaged students, many educators believe that the poor achievement gains resulting from summer school, extended school year, and year-round programs cannot be used as a reason to abandon these programs. Instead, they point out that these poor results can be at least partly attributed to the current programs themselves. As Curtis, Doss, & Totusek (1982) note, *summer schools* currently suffer from:

- short duration—usually four hours or less day, for 3-6 weeks;
- loose organization;
- little time for advance planning;
- low academic expectations by both teachers and students;
- more emphasis on “fun” than during the regular year;
- discontinuity between the curriculum of the regular year and summer school;
- time wasted as new teachers assess, get to know, and establish expectations with students;
- teacher fatigue from the regular school year;
- low student attendance rate;
- homogeneous classes, largely composed of low-income, low-achieving students, which is known to correlate with low achievement.

Similarly, *year-round* programs may be generating low achievement results, compared with nine-month programs, because of such factors as:

- curriculum changes when schools switch from nine-month to year-round programs;
- lack of support and assistance to teachers in adapting to the change;
- insufficient provisions for teacher fatigue;
- the administrative complexity of staggered schedules in secondary schools;
- parent objections to year-round programs, which may, or may not, be solvable through better publicity and planning.

Need For Research

Recent research shows no significant educational benefits from providing summer schools, extended school years, or year-round schooling to disadvantaged students. However, the severe educational difficulties faced by these students, combined with the many practical reasons for deviating from the traditional school year, are strong reasons why educators continue to hope for improvements in student achievement from these programs. While it is unfair to expect such improvements without a clear picture of how students learn over time, it is also clear that the programs themselves might justifiably be improved. Thus, additional research is needed on both student learning and the effects of various components of summer school, extended school year, and year-round schooling.

—Carol Ascher

References

- Ballinger, Charles (1987, January). Unleashing the school calendar. *Thrusts for Educational Leadership*, 16 (4), 16-18.
- Blai, B. (1986, September). Educational reform, it's about “time.” *Clearinghouse*, 60 (1), 38-40.
- Carter, L.F. (1984, August/September). The sustaining effects study of compensatory and elementary education. *Educational Researcher*, 13 (7), 4-13.
- Curtis, J., Doss, D., & Totusek, P. (1982). *Improving achievement for pupils of low socioeconomic strata: The gamble we must take*. Paper presented at the 1982 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York City. Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation. ED 218 371.
- Dougherty, J.W. (1981). *Summer school. A new look*. Bloomington. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Fastback 158.
- Heyns, B. (1986). Summer programs and compensatory education. The future of an idea. In B.I. Williams, P.A. Richmond, & B.J. Mason, *Designs for compensatory education. Conference proceedings and papers*. Washington, D.C.: Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc., III/3-III/34.
- Heyns, B. (1978). *Summer learning and the effects of schooling*. New York: Academic Press.
- Mazzarella, J. (1984, May). Longer day, longer year. Will they make a difference? *Principal*, 63 (5), 14-20.
- Merino, B.J. (1983, October). The impact of year-round schooling. A review. *Urban Education*, 18(3), 298-316.
- O.L., Grossman, J.B., & Milliner, J.A. (1987, April). *Summer training and education program (STEP). Report on the 1986 experience*. Philadelphia, PA. Public/Private Ventures.

ERIC Clearinghouse
on Urban Education
Institute for Urban and Minority
Education
Box 40
Teachers College, Columbia
University
New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-3433
Erwin Flaxman, Director
Wendy Schwartz, Editor

ERIC/CUE Digests draw together and summarize key information on current educational issues. Occasionally a Digest is devoted to a single report or study that is of major importance. Single copies of the Digests are available free from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education if the request is accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Please write to the Clearinghouse for permission to reproduce.

This Digest was developed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education with funding from Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. R188062013. The opinions expressed in this Digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

*Office of Educational
Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education*